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**THE PROBLEM OF ALTERITY
IN JOYCE'S POETICS**

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Thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
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ABSTRACT

This thesis will examine the problem of alterity that presents itself for “being” in relation to “language” in James Joyce’s *Dubliners*, *Stephen Hero*, *A Portrait of the Artist*, *Ulysses* and *Finnegan’s Wake*. I will argue that being in relation to language manifests itself into an ethical problem that can be traced back to the subject’s search for an origin. Blanchot’s writings on the “limit-experience” will be used as a methodological approach to the problem of being in relation to language. The theme of death and dying will be explored in each chapter through the dialectic of negativity. The dialectic of negativity arises from the problem of separation that comes between being and language. As being faces the limit to language, the subject faces the limits to being seen as another negative presence. Thus, once the subject’s negative thought doubles into the negation of absence, being becomes infinitely estranged by language. Here, the subject’s experience of separation manifests itself into signs of “affliction” that resembles a state of “dying” as being faces absence. Moreover, the dialogic of negativity opens up a dialogue between the subject’s relation to language and the subject that is questioned within the narrative. Therefore, Blanchot’s notion of the “neuter” will be used to explore the critical character of the narrator that questions the subject within the narrative from the exterior God like position, also linked to Blanchot’s notion of the “Outside”. The Outside space demands an ethical response from each subject called into question and afflicted with the haunting nature of being a double. This doubling space of alterity will be traced in this thesis in order to reveal a crisis for the subject in the irreducible state for “being-in-itself” that is locked in the sacred space of literature and present at the final experience of the limit to the Outside.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The long and winding road to my Joyce and Blanchot studies began at Monash University, Melbourne. I wish to thank Dr Alan Dilnot for giving me the opportunity to present a paper on *Ulysses* on a Modernist English Course, which sparked my first interest in Joyce. I missed the first seminar and had no choice but to present on Joyce. It was quite daunting as an undergraduate, but immensely rewarding and challenging to say the least. During my Masters course on Critical Theory, at Monash University, I became a disciple of Professor Kevin Hart who introduced me to Blanchot studies. I wish to thank Professor Hart for his dynamic passion for theory, which gave me the tools to study Blanchot's work. Blanchot can be rather esoteric and opaque, but he gave me the keys to understanding Joyce's literature from a philosophical perspective.

When I embarked on the prospect of commencing a PhD, I was most honoured and fortunate to be accepted by Professor Richard Kirkland from the English Department at Kings College London. His ongoing support and enthusiasm during moments of crisis and self-doubt were invaluable. For all the kindness and generosity he shared with his time, in discussing and reviewing my work, I owe many thanks. His guidance and expertise on Joyce studies managed to help me navigate this journey as a post-graduate researcher. To my co-supervisor Dr Hector Kollias I owe thanks for his astute insight into critical theory. He often challenged the most difficult areas of my research with his knowledge of Blanchot. I would also like to thank Kings College London for giving me the extra skills needed to become a researcher through their Graduate Teaching Programme, IT courses, and full use of the Maughan Library.

Outside of Kings College London, special thanks go to the International James Joyce Foundation for their welcoming me into their organisation, where I was given

the opportunity to present my work on Joyce amongst peers. My experience at all of the Joyce Conferences I attended only enriched and deepened my enthusiasm for Joyce studies. Firstly, I wish to thank Anne Fogarty from University College Dublin for granting me a graduate scholarship to attend the James Joyce International Research Colloquium at UCD Dublin in 2009. I wish to thank Morris Beja for asking me to write a report for the *James Joyce Newstletter* on “The Question of Joyce’s Scholarship Today” in regard to the XXII International James Joyce Symposium held in Prague, Czech Republic in 2010. I wish to thank Litteraria Pragensia for publishing my first paper on “The Question of Alterity and Stephen’s search for an Origin in Being in *Ulysses*” in *Hypermedia Joyce Studies* (Vol.10.No 2) 2010. I would also like to thank the Università degli Studi Roma Tre and Edizioni for published my paper on Joyce, “The Limits to Literature in *Ulysses* in the 21st Century” (Vol 13) 2012.

Sadly, during the writing of this thesis, my mother passed away. This was a difficult time of my life. Ironically, here I was studying a writer who had struggled to overcome the death of his own mother as he searched for an origin in the space of language, and now here I was doing the same. In a sense Joyce saved me from the horror that afflicted me at this time, as I came to understand the value of humanity in his work tied to the question of literature and the problem of being separated from an origin. I think the greatest lesson I learnt from Joyce in relation to this experience is that there is no way out, there is only self-creation through culture bound to the book. Life begins and ends with the book, where presence comes alive and spirit reveals itself. This may seem rather obscure, but this search led me to value the sacred space of literature and I am not a religious person, but I found an origin in the wake of death. Lastly, to my beloved ones that gave their support to sustain this adventure, thankyou.

ABBREVIATIONS

- CW* Joyce, James. *The Critical Writings of James Joyce*. Ed. Ellsworth Mason and Richard Ellmann. New York: Viking, 1958.
- D* Joyce, James. *Dubliners*. Ed. Robert Scholes and A. Walton Litz. New York: Viking, 1969.
- E* Joyce, James. *Exiles: A Play in Three Acts*. New York: Viking, 1951.
- FW* Joyce, James. *Finnegans Wake*. New York: Viking, 1939.
- GJ* Joyce, James *Giacomo Joyce*. Ed. Richard Ellman. New York: Viking, 1968.
- PO* Joyce, James *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. New York: Viking, 1968.
- SH* Joyce, James. *Stephen Hero*. New York: New Directions, 1963.
- U* Joyce, James. *Ulysses: The Corrected Text*. ED. Hans Walter Gabler with Wolfhard Steppe and Claus Mechior. New York: Random House, 1986.
- Cited by chapter and line number.

INTRODUCTION

Joyce, Blanchot and the Limit-Experience

“My mind rejects the whole social order and Christianity—home, the recognised virtues, classes of life, and religious doctrines. How could I like the idea of home . . . My mother was slowly killed, I think, by my father’s ill-treatment, by years of trouble, and by my cynical frankness of conduct. When I looked on her face as she lay in her coffin—a face grey and wasted with cancer—I understood that I was looking on the face of a victim and I cursed the system, which had made her a victim. We were seventeen in family. My brothers and sisters are nothing to me. One brother alone is capable of understanding me. Six years ago I left the Catholic Church, hating it most fervently. I found it impossible . . . Now I make open war upon it by what I write and say and do”.¹

Alterity is a philosophical problem in James Joyce’s literature that can be traced back the author’s revolt against injustice.² In a letter to Nora Barnacle, Joyce confesses that he rejects the repressive social order of his culture and sees no other way to liberty than to embark on a literary odyssey in pursuit of justice. Here, Joyce openly admits that the current social system has failed him as an individual, in his family life and also in the community. Without a doubt, he holds the Catholic Church responsible for the affliction that he senses in being a victim of a corrupt belief system, which offers him no hope or fortitude in life after his mother’s death. It is absolutely clear that this awakening has a profound effect on him, which leads him to “question” human “existence”. Joyce does this through a critique of social, moral and ethical values, where he puts “being into question”, as he searches for an answer to the horror that grips him. Geert Lernout argues that Joyce’s “critique of Catholicism” stems from the fact that the “Irish Catholic Church had evolved into a power hungry machine that

¹ James Joyce, *Selected Letters of James Joyce*, edited by Richard Ellmann (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1992), p. 25-26. Joyce’s letter to Nora Barnacle dates “29 August 1904”.

² The word “alterity” is primarily a philosophical concept meaning “otherness” that comes from the Latin word “alter”. It is an ethical problem for theorists that study relations, because the principle of exchanging one’s own perspective for that of the “other” can disrupt inherent systems of structure.

controlled almost every aspect of public life without being in any way accountable”.³

The ramification of Joyce’s refusal to accept the Catholic faith leads to a religious revolt that pushes him directly into the arms of literature, where he seeks justice. In the clearest of terms, Joyce finds salvation and truth in being empowered by the liberty of literature that is the source of becoming. However, his decision to embark on “war” and separate the self from the shackles of the Church presents a literary problem, as he experiences what it means to be alive before the “word” as “other”.⁴

As such, the problem of knowledge for the subject leads to a crisis for his being put into “question”. This critical problem has its roots in the dialectical relationship between “being” and “language”. Language is separate to the real world of flesh, but ironically still grounded in culture and bound to the book. Accordingly, the first question posed in the book of Genesis foregrounds our problem, as Fritz Senn notes in “the first word uttered”:⁵ “The first word that comes to Adam from on high after he has lapsed are where are you . . . the question concerning us is handed over to language”.⁶ Essentially, the separation between being and language is at the cutting edge of philosophical theory today, as Andrew Gibson notes, because philosophy is “powerless to name” an origin in theory.⁷ Here Alan Roughley, claims that “what is” being in relation to “letters” remains an “ongoing question” that appears to be the “foundation of philosophy”.⁸ In turn, Tim Conley notes: “Joyce repeatedly questions

³ See Geert Lernout, “Religion”, in *James Joyce in Context*, ed. John McCourt (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 332-341.

⁴ While Maurice Blanchot alternates between a small “o” and a large “O”. I shall specifically use the small “o” in this thesis and refrain from using the “Other”. Ostensibly, the question of “who is the other” remains unknown, and can from a philosophical perspective signify either the other person, or God. Indeed, Blanchot’s large “O” or little “o” foreshadows his discourse on the “Outside” in language.

⁵ See Fritz Senn *Inductive Scrutinies: Focus on Joyce* (Dublin: The Lilliput Press, 1995), pp. 9-11.

⁶ Maurice Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, trans. Susan Hanson (London: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), p. 128-29

⁷ See Andrew Gibson, *Postmodernity, Ethics and the Novel* (London: Routledge, 1999), pp. 193.

⁸ Alan Roughley, *Reading Derrida Reading Joyce* (Gainesville: University Press Florida, 1999), p. xii.

precisely what constitutes a word”.⁹ Here we can stop to note an intersection between philosophy and literature overlapping in current theoretical approaches to Joyce. Indeed, the “overwhelming problem” of language identified by Conley in Joyce, lies at the heart of the “question of literature” that reveals itself in Joyce’s *oeuvre* today. And this haunting “experience of alterity” for being seen as a double to the self is a “dialectical relation” that will be subsequently examined in the works of *Dubliners*, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, *Stephen Hero*, *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*.

This thesis aims to show that the experience of alterity reveals itself in Joyce’s writing at “the limit”, which is an ethical testimony to the question of literature present at the centre of the philosophical relationship between “being and language”. The philosophical problem of alterity will first be mapped out in this introduction as a means of opening up a critical dialogue between Joyce’s literature and leading French critical theorist Maurice Blanchot. I will first situate our problem on alterity in context of relevant texts, and then I will discuss Joyce and Blanchot’s historical background, which will foreground selected Joycean critical theorist’s work in relation to our topic. Blanchot’s review of Joyce’s *A Portrait* in relation to *Ulysses* will be discussed. I shall return to Blanchot’s critique of language in more detail as I carve out a malleable theory on alterity out of his later writings on the “limit-experience”, while highlighting critics that have drawn upon similar themes in theory.¹⁰ Subsets of the limit-experience will be discussed in subsequent themes that relate to the “dialectics of negativity”; “being Jewish”, “the image”, “the symbol”, “death”, “dying”, “the neuter”, and “the Outside”. Each tenet is an important aspect of the theory related to the problem of alterity that will be explored in different contexts, in subsequent chapters. However, all of these different aspects are inter-related to the single problem

⁹ Tim Conley, “Language and languages”, in *James Joyce in Context*, p. 311.

¹⁰ See Maurice Blanchot, “The Limit Experience”, in *The Infinite Conversation*, pp. 85-264.

of “being in relation to language”. I will then give a couple of different examples of how Blanchot makes use of his critical theory in light of the limit-experience, byway of his close readings of Nietzsche, Kafka, and Bataille, which will expose the haunting nature of alterity at work in the dialectical relations. Blanchot’s examples are relevant to this thesis on Joyce, as they offer a means of understanding his critical theory in the context of other modernist writers, and also his own reading of Joyce, where he touches upon the problem of alterity, by way of a close reading of the limit-experience that its put into practice. However, because Blanchot’s essay on Joyce was written relatively early in his career, in 1944, and his theory on the limit-experience surfaced post 1969; my own reading will delve more into Blanchot’s later theory and discuss it in his early essay. Hence, by putting the self into question, the limit to experience unfolds in the subject’s reflection on being “other” to language, and critically at “the limit”. Essentially, the final limit leads to the thought of “death”, which culminates into a state of “affliction” for being. This symptom is an experience of alterity that unravels in a form of writing as prayer, self-destruction, and even suicide. Joyce’s obsession with the question of language goes hand in hand with Blanchot’s interrogation of literature to the point of self-annihilation, through the destruction of presence, where language becomes part of the self-interrogation. Essentially the limit to being present in language is alterity, where “there is” something unknown in the separation that remains between the subject and object. Accordingly, Derek Attridge argues that the “text is other”, just as our “reading” response is “other”.¹¹ Here, “Reading Joyce remains a problem” as Stephen Heath

¹¹See Derek Attridge, “Signature/ Countersignature: Derrida’s Response to *Ulysses*”, in *Derrida and Joyce* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2013), p. 267.

argues, in light of Samuel Beckett's words on Joyce that pertain to "the absolute absence of the Absolute".¹² He claims, Joyce reveals, "'Reality', as without limits".¹³

With the question of "being", philosophy runs head on with the question of literature and right into the problem of being in alterity present in *Dubliners*, *A Portrait*, *Stephen Hero*, *Ulysses*, and the *Wake*.¹⁴ As such Blanchot's writing on the "limit-experience" will open up this critical debate: "The limit-experience is the response that man encounters when he has decided to put himself radically in question".¹⁵ Hence when man takes a good look at himself as Joyce's Dubliners are asked to do, they are called into question by language. Indeed, Hélène Cixous argues that "discourse is bought to its limit" in *Dubliners*.¹⁶ Here the seed of negative thought unfolds in each subject's encounter with "death". Subsequently, in *A Portrait*, Stephen questions the name of "the artist", before an absent God that hides "behind his handiwork" in the space of language (*PO* 233). In *Stephen Hero*, we witness "conflicting perspectives and experiences" as noted by John Paul Riquelme, in the subject's reversing possibilities as a means of justifying relations.¹⁷ In *Ulysses*, the problem of being in relation to language emerges for Stephen, as he questions the dead author, while questioning "an essential lack".¹⁸ In turn, Bloom is characterised by his negative disposition of difference; "the pork eating Jew", "the unknown, the stranger, foreign to all". Molly is unable to get to the real truth of her first sexual experience in the tapestry of language. Thus her "limit-experience resembles

¹² Stephen Heath, "Ambiviolences", in *Post-Structuralist Joyce* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), p. 46.

¹³ Heath, "Ambiviolences", in *Post-Structuralist Joyce*, p. 51.

¹⁴ From here on, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* will be abbreviated to *A Portrait* and *Finnegans Wake* will be abbreviated to the *Wake*.

¹⁵ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 203.

¹⁶ Hélène Cixous, "Joyce: The (r)use of writing", in *Post-Structuralist Joyce: Essays from the French* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1984), p. 21.

¹⁷ See John Paul Riquelme, "Stephen Hero and *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*", in *The Cambridge Companion to James Joyce* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 120.

¹⁸ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 205.

something like a new origin . . . Yes. Presence without anything present”.¹⁹ Funnily enough, Heath notes Joyce “would ask pointedly to be told who had written *Ulysses*”, while writing the *Wake*, as if it was written by another.²⁰ Indeed, the problem of language unfolds in the *Wake*, where being is presented in fragments of broken characters showing, “*human beings, in interval and as though suspended*”.²¹ Essentially, Joyce searches for truth in being in language in order to break free from all restraint, while he never moves away from his central concern, the exegesis of being bound to language. Language is “the limit” to existence in life, “built on top of its own ruins”.²² However, as Heath notes, it is in Joyce’s refusal to form unity in relations that open up plural relations “in a dialogue of forms”.²³ This is where Joyce stands in close proximity to Blanchot’s theory of the limit-experience, understood in his exegesis on “negativity” present in Friedrich Nietzsche’s work specifically on the “affirmation and the eternal return”.²⁴ This project begins with a “revolt focused on a ‘transvaluation of values’” as Christopher Butler notes.²⁵ Essentially, Joyce’s revolt shows “first the death of God, its consequences in nihilism, and finally the eternal return”.²⁶ Indeed, this philosophical exegesis on alterity will shed light on Joyce’s writing “understood as space” in the critical turn to a sacred “experience of an art”.²⁷

The question of art was a major occupation for a prominent, young, French intellectual by the name of Maurice Blanchot, who was living in Paris in the 1940’s while Joyce was living there too, and he helped shaped much of today’s philosophy of

¹⁹ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 209.

²⁰ Heath, “Ambivillences”, in *Post-Structuralist Joyce*, p. 34.

²¹ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 307.

²² Maurice Blanchot, *Work of Fire*, trans. Charlotte Mandell (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), p. 301.

²³ Heath, “Ambivillences”, in *Post-Structuralist Joyce*, p. 43.

²⁴ See Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 264-285.

²⁵ Christopher Butler, “Joyce the Modernist”, in *The Cambridge Companion to James Joyce*, ed. Derek Attridge (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 67.

²⁶ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 273.

²⁷ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 295.

literature, including current Joycean scholarship. However, he is virtually absent from the Joycean academic body of scholarship today, apart from scattered fleeting references. A protégé of Blanchot's, Jacques Derrida argues that "Blanchot remains far ahead of us: 'Waiting for us, still to come, to be read, to be reread by those who have done so ever since they have known how to read'".²⁸ Vincent Giroud claims that Blanchot was "equal to the greatest".²⁹ Indeed, Blanchot was writing about literature from a philosophical perspective at the same time Joyce's first novel *A Portrait* became available in translation from English to French in Paris. In fact, in 1944, Blanchot wrote a review on this translation, as noted by Sam Slote in the "Critical Reception of Joyce in France".³⁰ Here, there is little mention of Blanchot's review of Ludmila Savitzky's French translation of *A Portrait*, which to date has not been translated to English.³¹ However, Slote implies that Blanchot, who was "never the timeliest of writers, reviewed *A Portrait* in 1944".³² He then proceeds to quote a sketch from Blanchot's review essay: "Joyce's great words are vast dreams that use a total reality to deliver their enigmas. *Dedalus* is a discreet reverie, with an extreme charm and intensity that envelops lived experiences and through them expresses universal meaning".³³ If we take a closer look at Blanchot's writing in *Le Premier roman de Joyce*, it is interesting to note that Blanchot's search for an "origin" in Joyce's work of literature begins with the "question" of the "author", just as Stephen searches for an "origin" in Hamlet's dead father's ghost. Blanchot's analysis of the artist's pursuit for absolute totality singles out a "religious tragedy" for the being that

²⁸ Christopher Fynsk, "Forward", in *The Station Hill Blanchot Reader*, p. xv.

²⁹ See Giroud, Vincent, "Transition to Vichy: The Case of Georges Pelorson", in *Modernism/Modernity* (Muse: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000) Volume 7, Number 2, p. 234.

³⁰ See Sam Slote "Critical Response to Joyce in France", in *The Reception of Joyce in Europe: Volume II: France, Ireland and Mediterranean Europe*, ed, Geert Lernout and Wim Van Mierlo (London: Thoemmes Continuum, 2004), pp. 362-422.

³¹ Maurice Blanchot, "Le Premier roman de Joyce", in *Chroniques littéraires du Journal des débats : Avril 1941-août 1944* (Paris: Gallimard, 2007). See Appendix for a translation of this text by myself.

³² Slote, "Critical Response to Joyce in France", in *The Reception of Joyce in Europe Volume II*, p. 365.

³³ Slote, "Critical Response to Joyce in France", in *The Reception of Joyce in Europe Volume II*, p. 365.

yearns to be a libertine: “to live, to err, to triumph, to recreate life out of life”.³⁴ This feat is seen as an act of “perpetual negation . . . (for what) can never be reached”.³⁵ Indeed, at this point Nietzsche’s influence can be interpreted in the “destroyer of the Christian world” marked in the “Death of God”, which allows the author to “leave his refuge and experience his unique possibilities, to become fully responsible for himself, that is, to become creator”.³⁶ Ostensibly, Blanchot stakes his claim on Stephen’s negative thought, which is theorised in the image of Hamlet’s dead father’s ghost, as he too mediates on the “calling into question” of the “author” Joyce. Blanchot states that *A Portrait* is “less well known than *Ulysses*”.³⁷ Furthermore, he claims it had been “neglected” in France and “it was considered to be a starting work, which, as wrote Louise Gillet... preparation, necessary for the author, useless for the public”.³⁸

In his essay on Joyce, Blanchot singles out the word “artist” as he questions literature, while he claims that “it is Joyce that we continuously go back to in this portrait that he drew of himself, in this autobiography . . . *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* is the story of Joyce, the youth of Joyce, the vocation of which he became aware of, and, furthermore, as . . . Savitzky says, it is a magical portrait . . . (that) creates the being that it reveals”.³⁹ In short, Blanchot deploys the dialectical philosophy of “negativity” as a method of inquiry in his search into the author’s creativity, “which is full of amphilogies, of slippery meanings”.⁴⁰ Therefore in order to find an origin in the space of literature, he demands a response from the work that creates being. For Blanchot “being” is a notion that begins with “the idea that the

³⁴ Blanchot, “Le Premier Roman de Joyce”, in *Chroniques littéraires*, p. 608.

³⁵ Blanchot, “Le Premier Roman de Joyce”, in *Chroniques littéraires*, p. 609.

³⁶ Blanchot, *Work of Fire*, p. 289.

³⁷ Blanchot, “Le Premier Roman de Joyce”, in *Chroniques littéraires*, p. 606.

³⁸ Blanchot, “Le Premier Roman de Joyce”, in *Chroniques littéraires*, p. 607.

³⁹ Blanchot, “Le Premier Roman de Joyce”, in *Chroniques littéraires*, p. 607.

⁴⁰ Blanchot, “Le Premier Roman de Joyce”, in *Chroniques littéraires*, p. 607.

word is the death of the thing”,⁴¹ as noted by Jean Michel Rabaté. Indeed, Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit* was interpreted via Kojève’s lectures in Paris from 1933 to 1939.⁴² While there is no account of Joyce attending Kojève’s lectures in Paris, Blanchot attended the lectures alongside Deleuze, Bataille, and Lacan.⁴³ The new “status of consciousness” presented by Kojève was “summarised in one word: negativity”.⁴⁴ The being of consciousness was said “henceforth to be conceived as a ‘dialectical’ being”.⁴⁵ The dialectical being that negates itself in language is a thought central to Blanchot’s reading of Dedalus’ “perpetual negation . . . of what can never be reached”. Furthermore, Blanchot argues that “the transformation of a character” prompted by “a religious tragedy” marks “events of universal order, of timeless motives that coincide with an existence”.⁴⁶ It is important to note that Blanchot uses the word “faith” before “existence” to mark “presence” noted in the “trace” of literature. According to Hector Kollias, the “trace” is the “materiality” of the text, which testifies to presence of being.⁴⁷ Leslie Hill states that Blanchot’s unique approach to being “renewed the critical debate concerning the ontological—or non-ontological—status of literature . . . to think the question of the ethical demand to which writing is a response”.⁴⁸ Here Blanchot’s work stands apart from other theorists. According to the law, the subject only exists in the real world in language; however, what happens when the subject awakens to a critical experience, where the subject

⁴¹ Rabaté, “Two Words for Joyce”, in *Derrida and Joyce*, p. 289.

⁴² Vincent Descombes, *Modern French Philosophy*, trans. L. Scott-Fox and J. M. Harding (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 10.

⁴³ See Descombes, *Modern French Philosophy*, pp. 10-14.

⁴⁴ Descombes, *Modern French Philosophy*, p. 32-36. Descombes gives an overview of “negativity” in terms of a dualist ontology, whereby man is reduced to the phenomenological reduction of “being”.

⁴⁵ Descombes, *Modern French Philosophy*, p. 23.

⁴⁶ Blanchot, “Le Premier Roman de Joyce”, in *Chroniques littéraires*, p. 608.

⁴⁷ See Hector Kollias, “A Matter of Life and Death: Reading Materiality in Blanchot and de Man”, in *After Blanchot: Literature, Criticism, Philosophy*, edited by Leslie Hill. Brian Nelson & Dimitris Bardoulakis (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2005), p. 129. Kollias argues that materiality of the text is what “Derrida would call a trace”. The trace is inextricably bound to the writing of the text.

⁴⁸ Leslie Hill, *Blanchot: Extreme Contemporary* (London: Routledge, 1997), p. 2.

recognises that language is separate to life, thus the ground upon which the subject exists is destabilised? Blanchot notes that this experience of literature reoccurs in works of modernist writers, such as George Bataille, Franz Kafka, Stéphane Mallarmé, and Friedrich Nietzsche. Blanchot was the first to theorise “the limit-experience”, and I shall argue that this radical experience of alterity occurs in Joyce also, as I undertake an examination of the “limit-experience” at work in relations in Joyce’s literature.⁴⁹

Before we move on to discuss Joyce’s literature and Blanchot’s philosophy on alterity in the limit-experience any further, it is important to take a step back and ask imperative questions. Did Blanchot and Joyce ever meet, or did they know each other, since Blanchot wrote an essay on Joyce, and they both lived in Paris at the same time? In the “Case of Pelorson”, Vincent Giroud⁵⁰ claims that Georges Pelorson became acquainted with Samuel Beckett in 1930, where he was a French Lecturer at Trinity College, Dublin.⁵¹ Subsequently, Giroud states that Pelorson introduced Bataille to Blanchot in February 1941, which means that Blanchot did not meet Joyce via Bataille.⁵² However, Leslie Hill affirms that Blanchot met Bataille in late December 1940.⁵³ It is documented that Pelorson had dinner with Joyce and Nora in November 1940.⁵⁴ So Blanchot may not have met Joyce in person, but he was in the same circle of writers, poets and literary critics in the two decades while Joyce lived in Paris,⁵⁵ alongside Paul Valéry, Marcel Proust, Andre Gide, Jean-Paul Sartre, and Jean

⁴⁹ See Kevin Hart, *Postmodernism* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2004), p. 52-55. Kevin Hart argues that main ideas of postmodernism can be traced directly back to Blanchot. Hart also claims that Foucault held Blanchot to be a prime witness to a new “episteme” as he refigured the thought of “experience” and the “way in which our knowledge is organised” through the “erasure” of the human subject.

⁵⁰ Vincent, “The Case of Georges Pelorson”, in *Modernism/Modernity*, p. 234.

⁵¹ Vincent, “The Case of Georges Pelorson”, in *Modernism/Modernity*, p. 221.

⁵² Vincent, “The Case of Georges Pelorson”, in *Modernism/Modernity*, p. 234.

⁵³ Hill, *Blanchot: Extreme Contemporary*, p. 11.

⁵⁴ Vincent, “Transition to Vichy: The Case of Georges Pelorson”, in *Modernism/Modernity*, p. 234.

⁵⁵ See Jean Michel Rabaté, “Joyce the Parisian”, in *The Cambridge Companion to James Joyce*, ed. Derek Attridge (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 54.

Prévost.⁵⁶ Needless to say, Blanchot's work on literature includes hundreds of articles of literary criticism, which includes numerous essays on Beckett, Duras, Höderlin, and Kafka, just to name a few.⁵⁷ Indeed, so why did Blanchot write only one relatively short essay on Joyce, yet he placed his name in the same category of writers such as Schönberg, Einstein, and Picasso, "throwing Marx into the bargain"?⁵⁸ This fact begs the question: did Blanchot use Joyce as a source of inspiration in his own theory on language, which evolved into his own work underpinning deconstruction? Slote points out that Joyce "confessed to Beckett" that he may have "oversystematized *Ulysses*" suggesting, "Joyce himself might be considered the book's first post-structuralist reader", therefore a precursor to deconstructuralist theory.⁵⁹ However, Kevin Hart argues that main ideas of postmodernism can be traced directly back to Blanchot.⁶⁰ Interestingly, Blanchot argues: "certain books rise above the others to become at this altitude the visible sign of the whole".⁶¹ He proceeds to argue that when the artist calls art into question, there remains a critical problem in the space of literature tied to the subject's search for existence, a thought he ponders on after dropping Joyce's name amongst god-like geniuses. Here, Blanchot asks his readers to question art: "What does it mean to create? Why would the artist or the poet be the creator par excellence? Creating belongs to the old theology . . . to take over from God".⁶² In search of meaning in being, Blanchot questions literature as the sacred, just as Joyce begs to know the origin of being in the word, questions that are explicitly raised in *Dubliners*, *Stephen Hero*, *A Portrait*, *Ulysses* and also *the Wake*.

⁵⁶ See Noel Riley Fitch, *Sylvia Beach and the Lost Generation: A History of Literary Paris in the Twenties & Thirties* (London: W. W. Norton & Compnay, 1985), p. 371.

⁵⁷ See Hill, *Blanchot: Extreme Contemporary*, pp. 274-298.

⁵⁸ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 400.

⁵⁹ Sam Slote, "Structuralism, Deconstruction, Post-structuralism, in *James Joyce in Context*, ed John McCourt (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 65.

⁶⁰ Hart, *Postmodernism* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2004), p. 52-55.

⁶¹ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 400.

⁶² Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 401.

Decades later, Blanchot's theory comes to be seen as revolutionary for contemporary French scholars and a hidden source of theoretical riches for other Joycean academics today. Hill claims that: "Blanchot is arguably one of the most challenging and influential figures in twentieth-century writing, whose work (on the question of literature) has exerted a decisive impact on thinkers as varied as Barthes, Bataille, Derrida, Deleuze, Foucault, Kristeva, and Levinas".⁶³ Indeed, Lernout mentions Blanchot's name in *The French Joyce*: however, his philosophy of literature receives little attention, which is interesting considering the fact that Blanchot tethered on the edge of French Joycean scholars work related to post-structuralist theory and deconstruction for decades. Ironically, Lernout claims that his own PhD dissertation on Heidegger in 1984 was influenced by Blanchot's critical texts via Kojève's lectures on Hegel.⁶⁴ Looking back, there is mention of Blanchot by Pierre Beaydry in a reference to Joyce by way of Heidegger".⁶⁵ Admittedly, Lernout notes that Philippe Sollers pays homage to Blanchot in *L'infini* (1983), a critical journal on the theory of literature that succeeded *Tel Quel* (1960-1983).⁶⁶ *Tel Quel* was founded in 1958 in Paris by Philippe Sollers. Interestingly, Lernout points out that John Duns Scotus' account of *L'infini* was inspired by the "same godfathers" that created the French avant-garde journal *Tel Quel*; namely, Borges, Blanchot, Lautramont, Levinas, and Artaud. Here the science of literature was seen as being infinite in theory in regard to liberty for being in relation to language: "Theology is the science of the individual being whose essence is individualized by means of infinity".⁶⁷ *Tel Quel* was essentially a literary journal at the forefront of French critical theory, publishing essays on post-structuralism and deconstruction. However, Lernout also notes that

⁶³ Hill, *Blanchot: Extreme Contemporary*, p. i.

⁶⁴ Lernout, *The French Joyce*, p. 66.

⁶⁵ Lernout, *The French Joyce*, p. 115.

⁶⁶ Lernout, *The French Joyce*, p. 158.

⁶⁷ Lernout, *The French Joyce*, p. 159.

Cixous' reading of the *Wake*, in the "Effacement of the Names" 1968, was influenced by Blanchot.⁶⁸ In addition, Lernout points out that Rabaté's essay "Broch's reading of Joyce" refers to Blanchot, in regard to the thought that "destruction becomes an act of love".⁶⁹ It is important to note that Rabaté makes a reference to Blanchot in light of the theme of silence in "*Silence in Dubliner*".⁷⁰ His reference to the theme of "silence" refers to the untranslatable apex that the work reaches at the moment of inflection and self-discovery once the work is reduced to the symptom of "mourning". Rabaté later draws upon Blanchot's notion of neutrality in *Joyce Upon the Void*.⁷¹ Again, he pays homage to Blanchot in his article "Two Joyces for Derrida", where he acknowledges Blanchot's influence on Derrida's own work on "questioning of phenomenology".⁷²

Ostensibly, Jacques Derrida is a French philosopher who made his way into the *Tel Quel* circle by contributing papers on Joyce. He delivered "Two Words for Joyce"⁷³ (1982) and "*Ulysses* Gramophone: Hear Say Yes In Joyce",⁷⁴ and, according to Joseph Brooker, influenced "conductors of new French theory" into Britain.⁷⁵ Indeed, Derrida's "questioning of literature"⁷⁶ stands in close proximity to Blanchot's theory of literature.⁷⁷ It is possible to argue that Derrida uses Blanchot as a source for his philosophical approach to reading *Ulysses* and the *Wake*. Essentially, Derrida pays homage to Blanchot in his reference to literature as the "non access to

⁶⁸ Lernout, *The French Joyce*, p. 45.

⁶⁹ Lernout, *The French Joyce*, p. 97.

⁷⁰ See Jean Michel Rabaté, "Silence in Dubliners", in *James Joyce: New Perspectives*, ed. Colin MacCabe (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982), p. 69.

⁷¹ See Jean Michel Rabaté, *Joyce Upon the Void* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991), p. xiii. Rabaté mentions Blanchot's notion of the "neuter", but he does not go on to explain what this term means. The neuter is an important concept for Blanchot that will be discussed in this introduction.

⁷² Rabaté, "Two Joyces for Derrida", *Derrida and Joyce*, pp. 289-290.

⁷³ Jacques Derrida, "Two Words for Joyce", *Post Structuralist Joyce*, ed. Derek Attridge and Daniel Ferrer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), pp. 145-160.

⁷⁴ Jacques Derrida, "Ulysses Gramophone", *Acts of Literature* (London: Routledge, 1992), pp. 253-310.

⁷⁵ See Joseph Brooker, *Joyce's Critics: Transitions in Reading and Culture* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2004), p. 150-51. Brooker notes by way of Patrick Ffrench's records that claim it was Derrida's appropriation of Joyce that "bought him into the *Tel Quel* circle".

⁷⁶ See Jacques Derrida, *Acts of Literature*, ed. Derek Attridge (London: Routledge, 1992), pp. 1-27.

⁷⁷ Hill, *Blanchot: Extreme Contemporary*, p. 173.

death”: “When Blanchot constantly repeats—and it is a long complaint and not a triumph of life—the impossible . . . to that which lives without having a name”.⁷⁸ Indeed, in “Two Words for Derrida”, Rabaté argues: “What Blanchot brings to Derrida is the strong awareness that any ‘work’ will surprise its writer, and the sense that writing is the name of a process by which I ‘become other’”.⁷⁹ In reference to “the other”, Rabaté alludes to alterity. Here the question of language becomes a preoccupation for Derrida in reference to Blanchot’s *Madness of the Day* in his reading of *Ulysses*, as he asks: “Who signs Joyce’s name?”⁸⁰ Indeed, Attridge notes in his work on “singularity” that the notion of alterity unfolds in “the otherness and singularity of the literary text”.⁸¹ As Attridge points out, there is a “limitation” to “alterity” that Derrida equally perceives in the philosophical question of “what is” untranslatable in the text itself. The search for an origin in literature is a problem linked to the unknown father and author of all creation assigned to God himself. Moreover, in “Two Words for Joyce”, Derrida repeatedly refers to “two words” in his critique of Joyce, beginning with “he war”, a pun on “YAHWE”.⁸² The problem of knowing “the origin” of language that comes from the exteriority, resurfaces in the ongoing “absence of intentional presence”.⁸³ “He war: he was—he who was (‘I am he who is or who am)’”.⁸⁴ Indeed, Andrew Mitchell and Sam Slote question “Derrida’s reading of Joyce as that which equivocates between interiority and alterity” in light of “God the father” (*Ba’bl*).⁸⁵ Neither Mitchell nor Slote proceed to explicate the notion of alterity in their introduction on *Derrida and Joyce*, while it is a

⁷⁸ Derrida, *Aporias*, p. 77.

⁷⁹ Rabaté, “Two Words for Derrida”, in *Derrida and Joyce*, p. 290.

⁸⁰ Derrida, “Ulysses Gramophone”, p. 289.

⁸¹ Attridge, “Signature/ Countersignature: Derrida’s Response to *Ulysses*”, in *Derrida and Joyce*, p. 267.

⁸² Derrida, “Two Words for Joyce”, in *Post-Structuralist Joyce*, pp. 145-159.

⁸³ Derrida, “Ulysses Gramophone”, in *Acts of Literature*, p. 276.

⁸⁴ Derrida, “Two Words for Joyce”, in *Post-Structuralist Joyce*, p. 145.

⁸⁵ See Andrew J. Mitchell and Sam Slote, “Derrida and Joyce: On Totality and Equivocation”, in *Derrida and Joyce: Texts and Contexts* (New York: State University Press, 2013), pp. 1-15.

pertinent subject that appears to be skirted around, but never implicitly pinned down, or directly confronted, in the wake of recent Joycean scholarship on the question of language. If the notion of alterity is touched up, it is generated specifically through the work of Derrida, which is why it is imperative to go back to the original source of deconstruction, and post-structuralist theory byway of Blanchot who can contribute a rich mine of critical theory towards the problem of alterity in Joyce's literary works.⁸⁶

The origin of creation or "paternity for Joyce"⁸⁷ in Derrida and the "theme of paternity"⁸⁸ for Blanchot is a critical problem where both theorists reading of Joyce's literature stands in close proximity. Indeed, Roughley argues, Derrida's reading of Joyce reveals a striking confession in regard to paternity; by way of "invoking his own Judaic heritage. Derrida hints that his birthright might qualify him, a self-confessed 'incompetent' in matters Joycean".⁸⁹ This feat can be traced back to the paradoxical creation of the world, according to the Jewish God that remains ineffable: "thou shalt not translate me".⁹⁰ Indeed, Derrida disrupts a linear reading on Joyce with random acts of difference to show that knowledge is an inauthentic experience for being in relation to language. Here the irreducible experience of translation highlights an impossible relation in the interpretation of events for Derrida. So too, Christine van Boheemen-Saaf argues that the "condition of perpetual dispossession (the wandering Jew) of being in exile without possibility of a return" is a ploy by Derrida to "claim Joyce for a more Hebraic inscription".⁹¹ However, Blanchot draws upon aspects of Jewish philosophy to describe *Ulysses* in light of "indefinite renewal of the language",

⁸⁶ See Marian Eide, *Ethical Joyce* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002). While Eide claims that her work is the first "literary ethics" on Joyce, she primarily takes a feminist approach.

⁸⁷ Jacques Derrida, *The Gift of Death*, trans. David Wills (London: Chicago Press, 2008), p. 138.

⁸⁸ Blanchot, "Le Premier Roman de Joyce", in *Chroniques littéraires*, p. 608.

⁸⁹ Alan Roughley, "'Memormee': Notes on Derrida's Re-Markings of Desire and Memory in Joyce", in *Derrida and Joyce*, p. 239.

⁹⁰ Derrida, "Two Words for Joyce", in *Post-Structuralist Joyce*, p. 154.

⁹¹ Christine van Boheemen-Saaf, "Matricidal Writing: Philosophy's Endgame", in *Derrida and Joyce*, p. 191.

and also the “sovereign creation of the meaning of the word”.⁹² Indeed, for Derrida, the “signature that becomes spectral” is a problem theorised in the “aporia”, which runs head on with “being Jewish” and the unknown God. Interestingly, Rabaté argues that “what Derrida proposes here is not a philosophical reading of Joyce” but “more precisely, it is a reading of Joyce for philosophy”.⁹³ Furthermore, Rabaté does not mention Jewish philosophy in particular, which is relevant. Ironically, Derrida’s himself claims his theory is “a *différance* in being-with-itself of the present”.⁹⁴ Roughley points out that Derrida’s reading of the aporia, also linked to the notion of “*différance*”⁹⁵ reveals an “ongoing process of becoming” otherness, in Joyce’s works.⁹⁶ I shall argue that this process of “otherness” unfolds for the being in the experience of separation from language, while being caught in a double bind in the guise of alterity. In support of Roughley, David Vichnar foresees “deconstructionist theory” as “inexhaustibility paving the way for the work yet to be done” on Joyce.⁹⁷ Hence, while the problem of being in relation to language in Joyce’s *oeuvre* is not a new area of research as Brooker points out in *Joyce’s Critics*,⁹⁸ the problem of alterity in Joyce is a crucial problem that calls for investigation, from a philosophical perspective. Indeed, because Blanchot comes before Derrida on Joyce and after Derrida on Joyce, this thesis will open an area of research that has been disavowed, by the exclusion of Blanchot’s critical presence that demands recognition from scholars.

While this thesis is not about religion, the Talmudic ethics of “being Jewish” is fundamental to understanding Blanchot’s exegesis on negativity, which informs

⁹² Blanchot, “Le Premier Roman de Joyce”, in *Chroniques littéraires*, p. 608.

⁹³ Rabaté, “Two Joyce’s for Derrida”, in *Joyce and Derrida*, p. 292. Following this argument, Rabaté states that a “systematic philosophical reading of *Finnegans Wake* remains to be done.

⁹⁴ Jacques Derrida, *Aporias*, trans. Thomas Dutoit (California: Stanford University Press, 1993), p. 17.

⁹⁵ Jacques Derrida, *Dissemination*, trans. Barbara Johnson (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1981), p. 5. Derrida underpins his concept of *différance*—a French word that combines difference with deferral to suggest that the differential nature of meanings in language ceaselessly defers or postpones.

⁹⁶ Roughley, *Reading Derrida Reading Joyce*, p. xiii.

⁹⁷ David Vichnar, *Joyce Against Theory* (Praha: Litterarai Pragensia, 2010), p. 67.

⁹⁸ See Brooker, *Joyce’s Critics*, p. 179.

Derrida's work on alterity in Joyce.⁹⁹ Blanchot argues that when God asks Adam, "Where are you" the question "concerning us is handed over to language".¹⁰⁰ For the Jew, God is infinitely separated from man, who remains pure spirit in the "word" that is "manifest and concealed" before the presence of "Yahweh".¹⁰¹ It is impossible to know the God that stands apart from the "name", which in turn is an ethical problem, because the search for an origin leads to "absence". God is the "most hidden of hidden".¹⁰² The hidden creator emerges from the thought of God being the totality of life: "God as the One and Only being."¹⁰³ Epstein notes that the Torah is based on *kadósh*, which literally means the teaching of "holy unto God". Symbolically the negative connotation means "in separation from" and the positive in "dedication to".¹⁰⁴ Here, Emmanuel Levinas' writing on alterity states that the space of separation manifests itself as "desire", which comes between the self and the face of the other.¹⁰⁵ Indeed, Blanchot stands in close proximity to Levinas' thinking of the other, because he too sees language as being separated from being.¹⁰⁶ But, Blanchot stands apart from Levinas, because he "remains within the space of poetry or writing" as if refusing a synthesis linked back to a false idol.¹⁰⁷ Arguably, Blanchot's interpretation of the other deviates from Levinas, because he refuses all unity: "Blanchot's other is not the other of the same".¹⁰⁸ Blanchot reads the "other" as beginning with "the decision of Abraham separating himself from what is and affirming himself as a foreigner in order to answer a foreign truth".¹⁰⁹ Moreover,

⁹⁹ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, pp. 123-30.

¹⁰⁰ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 128.

¹⁰¹ Samuel T. Lachs, and Saul P. Wachs, *Judaism* (Illinois: Argus Communications, 1979), p. 58.

¹⁰² Epstein, *Judaism*, p. 135.

¹⁰³ Epstein, *Judaism*, p. 133.

¹⁰⁴ Isidore Epstein, *Judaism* (London: Penguin, 1990), p. 23.

¹⁰⁵ Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, p. 194.

¹⁰⁶ Jacques Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass (London: Routledge, 1997), p. 103.

¹⁰⁷ Gerald L. Bruns, *Maurice Blanchot* (London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), p. 116.

¹⁰⁸ Bruns, *Maurice Blanchot*, p. 118.

¹⁰⁹ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 126.

Blanchot sees truth in separation: “the Unknown one can know only by way of distance”.¹¹⁰ He argues that the Jew exists in a state of being always outside, engaged in a “limitless movement of refusal” to be in “exile, existence, exteriority, and estrangement”.¹¹¹ Indeed, the exegesis of “being Jewish” is born in the exodus of separation for Blanchot, a thought linked back to negative thought applied to God as holiness denotes separation from all.¹¹² Separation founds justice as pure relation from the Jewish perspective as it denotes righteousness in the decision to be cut off in all relationships.¹¹³ Blanchot’s perception of being Jewish affirms the right to the limit that leads to the exegesis on negativity that overturns each positive thought right into infinity: “The God of the Jews is the highest separation, he excludes all union”.¹¹⁴

Accordingly, the dialectical thought of an absent father—author--God can be understood from Blanchot’s reading of Nietzsche’s prophet Zarathustra.¹¹⁵ Zarathustra ushers forth the theory of the “Overman” and the logic of “the eternal recurrence”.¹¹⁶ Here Blanchot adopts the symbolic figure of the Overman to explore the limit to Jewish piety, which he sees as leading to infinite separation for “man to be what he is: the being who surpasses himself”.¹¹⁷ Zarathustra pronounces that “God is dead”.¹¹⁸ Lee Spinks argues that: “The challenge Zarathustra presents to the ‘Higher Man is to accept responsibility of a life without God’”.¹¹⁹ Blanchot argues: “The death of God leaves a place for man, then man’s death a place for the Overman”.¹²⁰ The thought of passing over recalls the Jewish thought of exodus as being is engaged in

¹¹⁰ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 126.

¹¹¹ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 128.

¹¹² Epstein, *Judaism*, p. 28.

¹¹³ Epstein, *Judaism*, p. 26.

¹¹⁴ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 128.

¹¹⁵ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (London: Penguin Books, 1969).

¹¹⁶ Lee Spinks, *Friedrich Nietzsche* (London: Routledge, 2004), p. 115.

¹¹⁷ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 147.

¹¹⁸ Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, p. 41.

¹¹⁹ Spinks, *Friedrich Nietzsche*, p. 119.

¹²⁰ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 247.

crossing movement once God disappears. Essentially, Blanchot argues that once man overcomes death, he begins to create life: “being who has overcome the void (created by the death of God) becomes the libertine to “command himself”.¹²¹ The Overman presents a model of being “not the end” but the beginning of a just relation, which becomes a power in the “right to death” as envisioned in the reversal of perspectives.¹²² Looking back, Blanchot argues that death is a “theological notion” related to language: “the atheist does not believe in God: this it’s the first degree of truth . . . Not to ‘believe’ in God. Not to know anything of God. And to love him only his absence . . . may be a love that is absolute pure”.¹²³ Zarathustra reaches a passage to a limit-experience seen in “God’s silence” present in the “worshipping ass as God” that brays “Ye-a”.¹²⁴ The “unutterable creature” affirms a testimony to the absent God: “Yes, a sacred Yes is needed, my brothers, for the sport of creation”.¹²⁵ Being comes to be seen as “fiction of free will” in accord with Blanchot’s revelation of the hidden being exposed at the limit.¹²⁶ His perception of language follows Nietzsche’s negative thought, which can be comparable to Jean-Luc Marion’s negative theology: “In short, ‘negative theology’ does not annul [*ne nie pas*] the essence, being, or truth of God, but denies [*les denier*] them so as to better re-establish them, in something like a hyperbole”.¹²⁷ Indeed, Blanchot’s thought places God in the “unknown” that has “no relation whatsoever” with man: “infinity is all we discover in God”.¹²⁸ He argues: “God’s name is therefore his real name only if we renounce everything in thinking

¹²¹ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 147.

¹²² Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 248.

¹²³ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 111.

¹²⁴ Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, p. 323.

¹²⁵ Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, p. 55.

¹²⁶ Spinks, *Friedrich Nietzsche*, p. 120.

¹²⁷ Jean-Luc Marion, “In the Name”, in *God, the Gift and Postmodernism*, John D. Caputo and Michael J. Scanlon (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), p. 23.

¹²⁸ Marion, “In the Name”, in *God, the Gift and Postmodernism*, p. 25.

it”.¹²⁹ This thought cuts a similar portrait to Abraham’s ineffable God which cannot be pinned down in the space of language: “I AM THAT I AM...HE IS THAT HE IS”.¹³⁰ Indeed, it also recalls Derrida reading of the *Wake*: “Countersigned God”.¹³¹

Blanchot makes it no secret that he reads literature through the dialectic of negativity present in his reading of Nietzsche and Hegel.¹³² Mark C Taylor argues that “For Hegel, this wholly Other is the God of Judaism”.¹³³ In turn, Blanchot concedes that “the commentator who Hegelianizes Nietzsche cannot, in this sense, be refuted”.¹³⁴ Thus Blanchot takes a graft of Hegel’s notion of death, which raises important questions in light of the dialectic of negativity and “dis-location”.¹³⁵ It is solely in the theme of death that the subject is divided abstractly into two parts. Indeed, Rabaté notes that: “Blanchot starts with Hegel to explore some paradoxes that any writer will have to face”.¹³⁶ Essentially, thought begins with the subject’s perception of being something that it is “not”, something other—negative. For Hegel, the subject is separated into a double between consciousness and self-consciousness also “being-in-itself” and “being-for-itself”.¹³⁷ These two states of being will be referred to in this thesis as a means of approaching the subject’s facing the experience of alterity. Indeed, for Hegel the inner spiritual being is separate to the exterior material letter of the “I” which houses being. Once the subject recognises that it exists in exile in language, “split up, into two ‘Thises’, one ‘This’ as ‘I’ and the other, ‘This as object’”, a synthesis forms in the “negation of sense certainty”.¹³⁸ It is important to

¹²⁹ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 110.

¹³⁰ Epstein, *Judaism*, p. 16.

¹³¹ Derrida, “Two Words for Joyce”, in *Post-Structuralist Joyce*, p. 158.

¹³² G.W.F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A. V. Miller (London: Oxford University Press, 1977).

¹³³ Mark C Taylor, *Alterity* (London: The University of Chicago Press, 1987), p. 187.

¹³⁴ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 157.

¹³⁵ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 159.

¹³⁶ Jean-Michel Rabaté, *The Future of Theory* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2002), p. 34.

¹³⁷ Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, p. 59.

¹³⁸ Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, p. 59.

note that for Hegel, once the subject recognises that it exists in self-alienation, a unified “synthesis” ultimately enlightens spirit in itself. However, Blanchot’s reading of Hegel goes beyond the synthesis in itself as he refuses all unity in being seen as other, while following strict separation for the self grounded in the obsession with death.¹³⁹ In fact, in the wake of death, Blanchot keeps on overturning relations for being to show there is no unity, there is only ongoing separation in the dialectical thought of negativity. Negative thought supports his dialogical approach to justice in theory. Essentially, as Descombes notes “all interpretation is polemical: to back an interpretation is to declare war on another” and because “facts have no meaning in themselves”, deconstruction is a strategic “ruse . . . when all is said and done”.¹⁴⁰ And this ruse begins specifically with the strategy that looks at language as being a double.

If we take a close look at Blanchot’s theory of language now beginning with being in relation to the “image”, the problem of alterity reveals itself as a doubling experience. Blanchot separates the image from the lived experience just like Hegel does in his approach to being, to expose “separation” between real events and imaginary thought in the imagination. Blanchot begins by asking: “what enables the image” to exist “at the limit, where there is nothing?”¹⁴¹ He argues that the image is a “secondary” object that “cleans up, appropriates” and “allows us to believe” the “real” in the “unreal”.¹⁴² Here the image that comes into contact with the mind is a double that “exists after the object . . . follows from it; we see, then we imagine”.¹⁴³ Thus, when being enters in a relationship with the image, it splits up in imaginary acts that “neutralize it”.¹⁴⁴ Hence, there is a measure of “distance” at the heart of

¹³⁹ Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, p. 63.

¹⁴⁰ Descombes, *Modern French Philosophy*, p. 116-39.

¹⁴¹ Blanchot, *The Space of Literature*, p. 255.

¹⁴² Blanchot, *The Space of Literature*, p. 255.

¹⁴³ Blanchot, *The Space of Literature*, p. 262.

¹⁴⁴ Blanchot, *The Space of Literature*, p. 262.

“dissimulation” as memory turns around to grasp the lost object that it perceives. Evidently, in the act of resurrection, the thing envisaged disappears into the missed experience replaced by a secondary act. This abstract perception of the image reveals that the imagination carries dead shadows of things around, which are not original, but secondary copies.¹⁴⁵ We can stop here to note that this is the site of alterity that haunts the text as other, as Terry Eagleton points out, in his reading of “Reality and Its Shadow”.¹⁴⁶ He argues that: “Alterity does not manifest itself in forms, which is the property of things”, but instead it manifests itself in between relations in doubling.¹⁴⁷ This analysis exposes an ethical problem for being that faces the self as a spectral image. Here being is a double, as now “man disappears” into an allusion of “duplicity”. Thus, each secondary image of being seen as an other is an actual frame of alterity, which reveals the subject is no more than a ghost. In accord, Blanchot points out that when the subject confronts being at the limit of a doubling experience, the subject passes beyond the limit to experience “limitless” limits, theorised in the “event as an image”.¹⁴⁸ Indeed, Blanchot reveals that the limit moves in the act of separation in the moving limit traced as other: “this limit ...the absence of relation—the inaccessible—the unseizable desolation of the desert—becomes”.¹⁴⁹ The moving limit unfolds in the subject’s encounter with death, as being is seen in an empty frame, just like a haunting ghost image that is a parody of the real lived experience doubled in time. Blanchot names this vision the “dead gaze”, as death has the power to bore a hole through each image that leads to limitlessness thought, “where the real enters . . . there is . . . no longer any limit”, in the “neutral double”.¹⁵⁰ In this literary act

¹⁴⁵ Blanchot, *The Space of Literature*, p. 252.

¹⁴⁶ Eagleton, *Ethical Criticism*, p. 117.

¹⁴⁷ Eagleton, *Ethical Criticism*, p. 116.

¹⁴⁸ Blanchot, *The Space of Literature*, p. 262.

¹⁴⁹ Blanchot, *The Space of Literature*, p. 184.

¹⁵⁰ Blanchot, *The Space of Literature*, p. 262.

“meaning does not escape into another meaning, but into the other of all meaning”.¹⁵¹

Hart points out that this “event” presents a problem for the artist, because the subject that “experiences the event as an image” faces a missed experience.¹⁵² The problem of seeing the self as a doubled image in life reveals a ghostly portrait of being in alterity.

The thought of “being” at the limit to experience in relation to alterity is carried over into Blanchot’s critique of the “symbol”. According to Blanchot, “the symbol signifies nothing; it is not even the imaged meaning of a truth”.¹⁵³ Here, Blanchot uses Hegel to support his negative dialectics: “Hegel says of the symbolic art that its principle fault is *Unangemessenheit*: the exteriority of the image and its spiritual content do not succeed in coinciding fully”.¹⁵⁴ Indeed, Blanchot reveals a paradox in language, as he shows that is made up of two elements, absence and presence. He illustrates this point as he argues for him to be able to say “woman” for example, he must first “take her flesh-and-blood” from her and “cause her to be absent, annihilate her”.¹⁵⁵ At this point, Blanchot is paraphrasing Mallarmé’s theory of “poetics”, which according to Brooker highlights the “lineaments of a new poetics” in light of the “novel viewed”.¹⁵⁶ Ironically, the poetic act for the writer is metaphoric of an act of destruction: “My language does not kill anyone”.¹⁵⁷ In accord Van Boheemen-Saaf notes that “writing is the material mark. Writing is a killer”.¹⁵⁸ So too, Blanchot argues that the symbolic force of language resembles an act of destruction on being. Here being is described as “dying” in a “deferred assassination”. Blanchot claims that the “I” will never form a unity with the symbol: “I will never

¹⁵¹ Blanchot, *The Space of Literature*, p. 263.

¹⁵² Hart, *Postmodernism*, p. 57.

¹⁵³ Blanchot, *The Work of Fire*, p. 79.

¹⁵⁴ Blanchot, *The Work of Fire*, p. 80.

¹⁵⁵ Blanchot, *The Work of Fire*, p. 322.

¹⁵⁶ Brooker, “Post-war Joyce”, in *James Joyce in Context*, p.61.

¹⁵⁷ Blanchot, *The Work of Fire*, p. 323.

¹⁵⁸ Van Boheemen-Saaf, “Matricidal Writing: Philosophy’s Endgame”, in *Derrida and Joyce*, p. 197.

arrive at it, not the individual, this particle of dust that I am”.¹⁵⁹ Essentially, Blanchot’s understanding of the destruction of the thing to the material word is a “poetic” experience, derived specifically from Mallarmé’s “identification of ‘poetic’ mediation with the possession of language”.¹⁶⁰ Here, in poetic language “birth appears to be like death, as its distinctive feature is to nullify the presence it signifies”.¹⁶¹ Indeed, in this double act, which is a poetic act, literature comes to be equated with the critical experience of alterity in the two fold movement of death and creation for spirit brought to life in the text. Seen in this light, Blanchot revives the primacy of the poetic nature of spirit for being seen in alterity in the text that exposes presence in the absence at the limit, for the subject. It is important to note that deconstruction is accused of annihilating the subject.¹⁶² Therefore, the thought of “presence” is an important feature, considering Lacanian scholars refused to accept there was no way to experience the “Real”. Here Blanchot’s work on alterity reveals the written text is an ethical “response” to a limit, which leads to a positive understanding of being at the limit. On the one hand yes there is “presence”, but on the other hand, there is only unknown “absence”. Indeed, being is now grounded in the “material”¹⁶³ word that is testimony to the limit of reason itself: “Yes presence without” absolute knowledge.¹⁶⁴

In Blanchot’s critique of the symbol it is possible to see two deaths at work, whereby the word is dead and so is the subject. Here there is no end to dying. He argues that the symbolic medium of language is “absence of that being, its

¹⁵⁹ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 209.

¹⁶⁰ Blanchot, *The Work of Fire*, p. 29.

¹⁶¹ Blanchot, *The Work of Fire*, pp. 31-33.

¹⁶² Paul Sheehan, “Postmodernism and Philosophy”, in *The Cambridge Companion to Postmodernism*, ed. Steven Connor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 32.

¹⁶³ See Hector Kollias, “A Matter of Life and Death: Reading Materiality in Blanchot and de Man”, in *After Blanchot: Literature, Criticism, Philosophy*, edited by Leslie Hill. Brian Nelson & Dimitris Bardoulakis (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2005), p. 129. Kollias points out that for Blanchot “the materiality of the word and of meaning, is concomitant with that of ‘life’ . . . the word’s life in meaning’s death”. Hence, the material book testifies to human existence bound to the word.

¹⁶⁴ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 309

nothingness, what is left of it when it has lost being”.¹⁶⁵ Strikingly, Blanchot unveils a scandal at the heart of truth in the “lie of fiction” seen in the double movement of withdrawal as “absence” shifts being round “sliding, like a door turning its silent axis”.¹⁶⁶ The symbol that represents literature is shown to be a counter-world to the real, which entombs the real spirit. As such, the synthetic construct leads to “loss of knowledge” that conceals being that “disappears”.¹⁶⁷ Here language is the site that leads to this “insane effort” to know “what is” at stake in the presence that “defeats every grasp”.¹⁶⁸ The symbol is a corrosive force on being akin to a crossing out movement hollowed out from the exteriority of negativity. This fact leads to the fact language remains “mute as a stone, as passive as a corpse” when questioned.¹⁶⁹ Again, Blanchot argues the symbol remains unknown and when the narrative itself is questioned: “It hides it does not give itself away . . . literature refuses”.¹⁷⁰ As a result, language is duplicity for being that redoubles in alterity, while “dying the death of the other”. Here there is no end to the subject’s experience of being “dead” in language, because the word has “infinite power of destruction—that is, or negation—through which consciousness ceaselessly makes and undoes itself”.¹⁷¹ Thus, Blanchot states that the thought of “dying” in an abstract notion for being that is not able to merge with the image or symbol. John Caputo sums up Blanchot’s notion of dying from the notion of death that has a “‘crushing solidity’, which shows ‘something finished’ in theory.”¹⁷² Instead, dying is seen as a non-arrival event: “Not I die, but it dies, *le ‘il’* in me is dying. Dying (like writing, like language no one speaks) has no author, no

¹⁶⁵ Blanchot, *The Work of Fire*, p. 322.

¹⁶⁶ Blanchot, *The Space of Literature*, p. 13.

¹⁶⁷ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 137.

¹⁶⁸ Descombes, *Modern French Philosophy*, p. 104.

¹⁶⁹ Blanchot, *The Work of Fire*, p. 329.

¹⁷⁰ Blanchot, *The Work of Fire*, p. 329.

¹⁷¹ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 226.

¹⁷² John, Caputo, *The Prayers and Tears of Jacques Derrida* (Bloomington: Indianapolis University, 1997), p. 82.

personal authority”.¹⁷³ Caputo argues that dying portrays an abstract way of seeing being beyond death. He claims: “dying does not mean getting sick or growing old”, instead it is a “kind of ontological erosion of the self, a hollowing out”.¹⁷⁴ The thought of dying “hollows” out the “I” while it strips being of power and control that shifts to language.¹⁷⁵ Thus, the subject is held in abeyance, just like a living, dead corpse. The subject exists in “no” stable home that speaks in relation to an unknown site outside. This theory can be seen at work in Derrida’s reading of *Ulysses* and the gramophone image that churns out the repetition of “yes” that answers to the call of the unknown, voice. Hence, self-consciousness encounters “dying” at the moving limit from “loss of dwelling”. This experience also recalls Nietzsche’s eternal return: “Yes to one joy . . . Yes to all my woe as well. All things are chained and entwined together . . . everything eternal”.¹⁷⁶ Indeed, this vision also supports Blanchot claim that being is essentially other, “becoming without end of a death impossible to die” in language.¹⁷⁷

The question of language in literature leads Blanchot to the final question, the question the narrator: “Who is speaking?” The question of the narrator leads to Blanchot’s most important notion in his work named “the neuter”, which leads us back to the first question of being in the book. In fact, Christophe Bidet states that: “Neither the one nor the other, neither clear nor obscure, the neuter [*le neuter*] –from the Latin *ne-ter*, neither this nor that—is a crucial term in Blanchot’s creative conceptual achievement”.¹⁷⁸ Bidet proceeds to argue that while Blanchot did not invent the term neuter, which can be traced back to Heraclitus, it is only with

¹⁷³ Caputo, *The Prayers and Tears of Jacques Derrida*, p. 83.

¹⁷⁴ Caputo, *The Prayers and Tears of Jacques Derrida*, p. 84.

¹⁷⁵ Caputo, *The Prayers and Tears of Jacques Derrida*, p. 85.

¹⁷⁶ Spinks, *Friedrich Nietzsche*, p. 128.

¹⁷⁷ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 209.

¹⁷⁸ Christophe Bidet, “The Movements of the Neuter”, trans. Michael FitzGerald and Leslie Hill, in *After Blanchot: Literature, Criticism, Philosophy*, p. 13.

Blanchot that the “neuter becomes a concept”.¹⁷⁹ Blanchot argues that the neuter acts like a circle in the exterior that has no centre in itself. It is a divine force that gives birth to its presence.¹⁸⁰ Indeed, Levinas states that: “Blanchot reminds the world that its totality is not total—that the coherent discourse it haunts does not catch up with another discourse which it fails to silence”.¹⁸¹ In addition, Levinas connects the neuter to his notion of “*il y a*” or “there is” something present in literature, which is ironically absent. Indeed, the concept of the neuter is unique in the sense that Blanchot explores it to the point that by questioning language of the narrator, he reveals “presence” at a “limit” to an unspeakable experience of alterity. Here Blanchot makes “absence speak” when the text is stripped down.¹⁸² Essentially, the subject can only encounter the limit to an experience with the language of the neuter that is “neither positive or negative . . . the ontological argument: God, whether he is or he is not, remains God: God sovereignty of the neuter.”¹⁸³ Indeed, the space of the neuter is seen as an “impossible” thought, because knowing “who” signs behind the narrator “that is” a space of absence in literature, in reference to God as author, is an impossible thought, because unity with the omnipotent creator of the first word is restricted: “what is still to be known when all is known: the inaccessible, the unknown itself”.¹⁸⁴ Hence, the neuter is seen as “uninterrupted noise. A difference does not let the world sleep, the troubles the order in which being and non being are ordered in a dialectic”.¹⁸⁵ However, one must have a “certain ear” to hear this “silent” sound that comes from “elsewhere” in absence as Derrida notes.¹⁸⁶ Furthermore, the call of the

¹⁷⁹ Bidet, “The Movements of the Neuter”, p. 13.

¹⁸⁰ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 389.

¹⁸¹ Levinas, *Proper Names*, p. 154.

¹⁸² See Timothy Clark, *Derrida, Heidegger, Blanchot* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 82.

¹⁸³ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 303.

¹⁸⁴ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 203.

¹⁸⁵ Levinas, *Proper Names*, p. 154.

¹⁸⁶ Derrida, “Ulysses Gramophone”, in *Acts of Literature*, p. 292.

neuter is “not a someone nor even a something. It is, but an *excluded middle*”.¹⁸⁷ Levinas states that the presence of the neuter manifests in a form of “transcendence” between “any world-behind-the worlds ever gave a glimpse”.¹⁸⁸ It resides in the subject’s relation with language connected implicitly to the exteriority or “Outside”. The Outside (with a capital O) is another important notion for Blanchot linked to language of the neuter, which is strictly “off limits” to human knowledge just like God: “knowing it entails unity with experience of what is outside the whole when the whole excludes every Outside”.¹⁸⁹ While the neuter is linked to the narrative voice in the exterior, its presence remains a secret. Here the author is absent and only the book is present, where the neuter in the text is the final limit to truth or presence of being.

While I wish to remain faithful to Blanchot’s use of the notion of the neuter that he sees as having “no” position at all in the text, it seems justifiable to hand over the narrator’s perspective to the character of the neuter. It is this, so to speak in the character of the neuter, in the space “inbetween”, in the space of the “Outside”, that is connected to the narrator’s voice coming from “elsewhere” and also responsible for the “indirect speech” of the characters voices coming from death’s space that will be examined as a double relation. Here, I shall specifically refer to the narrator as the “neuter” that moulds the subjects put on trial, to be judged, watched, followed, and shadowed as other characters to themselves from an exterior perspective, but also from within the perspective of the subject’s positions. This revolutionary act may seem like a literary blasphemy or even “death for the narrator” after a long tradition of naming the voice of the “author”. However, it is important to note, as Senn argues: “Literature can be said to have a middle voice, mediating between an external objective and a preening self-consciousness”, where “language still transitively refers

¹⁸⁷ Levinas, *Proper Names*, p. 155.

¹⁸⁸ Levinas, *Proper Names*, p. 154.

¹⁸⁹ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 204.

to something outside”.¹⁹⁰ Indeed, since this reading of Joyce follows in the footsteps of Blanchot’s theory on the “unknown” voice of literature coming from outside, then this radical wave of theory presents “the neuter”, which is pertinent to a faithful interpretation of Joyce’s “poetics” through a Blanchotian lens. Indeed, the narrator remains concealed behind subject’s relations as he calls each subject into “question”, which reveals itself in the affliction of the limit-experience. In addition, the dubious character of the narrator heralds an “unwanted intrusion” in the text as it presents itself as a hidden double, stalking in the guise of alterity.¹⁹¹ Blanchot argues that the narrative of the neuter resides as a mediator as such in fiction: “Narration that is governed by the neutral is kept in the custody of the third-person ‘he,’ a ‘he’ that is neither a third person nor the simple cloak of impersonality . . . the narrative ‘he’ or ‘it’ unseats every subject.”¹⁹² The relationship between the subject and the neuter will reveal a parallel dialogue that runs within each text. Looking back, the neuter can also be compared to Hugh Kenner’s “Uncle Charles Principle”.¹⁹³ This theory is named “after the character Simon Dedalus exiles to the outhouse to smoke his pipe”, as Michael Patrick Gillespie has noted in his work on “the dialectic condition”, which he proclaims follows Riquelme’s¹⁹⁴ approach to the “narrative operation” on “free indirect speech.”¹⁹⁵ Indeed, Riquelme argues that “Joyce’s narrator manipulates the complicated relationships among author, teller, and the tale . . . by focusing on doubling accompanying every act of narration”.¹⁹⁶ Essentially, the neuter doubles the

¹⁹⁰ Senn, *Inductive Scrutinies*, p. 31.

¹⁹¹ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 382.

¹⁹² Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 384.

¹⁹³ See Hugh Kenner, *Joyce’s Voices* (London: University of California Press, 1979), p. 18-33. Kenner states that “the narrative idiom need not be the narrator’s”: “The Uncle Charles Principle may extend from diction to syntax”, whereby the author helps to shape characters as a “perpetual outsider”.

¹⁹⁴ See John Paul Riquelme, *Teller and Tale in Joyce’s Fiction: Oscillating Perspectives* (London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1983).

¹⁹⁵ See Michael Patrick Gillespie, *Reading the Book of Himself: Narrative Strategies in the works of James Joyce* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1989), p. 89.

¹⁹⁶ Riquelme, *Teller and Tale in Joyce’s Fiction*, p. 3.

narrative as it not only questions the subjects, but also its own presence as it becomes aware of its self as an other speaking out from an “absence”. Here, we can also stop to note that the “absence” streaming into the text via the free indirect speech of the narrator also recalls David Hayman’s shadowy narrator, which he names “the Arranger”. According to Stanley Sultan, Hayman’s Arranger or “unnamed narrator” is “a significant felt absence in the text” which is “not a voice at all”, but still ironically a “clamorous presence”.¹⁹⁷ So too, for Blanchot, the neuter is a naked relation to “life” present in the narrative that “gives the impression that someone is talking in the background”, or indeed behind a text from the narrator’s God-like position itself.

It is important to keep in mind Hayman, Kenner, Booth, Gillespie, Riquelme and Derrida’s works on the “oscillating narrative perspectives” of free indirect speech in Joyce, now that Blanchot claims the neuter “is not the externalization of the inner thoughts of the writer, but the unfolding of language” itself.¹⁹⁸ This abstract thought, takes the position of the narrator to another level that will be explored in this thesis. Indeed, the neuter leads to the Outside that appears like an “empty gong” resounding in the text of the “hole-word . . . hollowed out in its centre by a hole” returning to death’s space.¹⁹⁹ Strikingly, the voice of the neuter comes from beyond a grave, while it exists as a silent voice with no author just like a secret God.²⁰⁰ Furthermore, Blanchot’s notion of the neuter foreshadows Derrida’s use of the term *différance* that manifests itself as a third space in the text, which cuts and binds relations.²⁰¹ Essentially, the notion of *différance* like the neuter marks, as Beardsworth argues, “an

¹⁹⁷ Stanley Sultan, Eliot, *Joyce and Company* (Oxford University Press, 1990), p. 277.

¹⁹⁸ Haase and Large, *Maurice Blanchot*, p. 81.

¹⁹⁹ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 385.

²⁰⁰ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 389.

²⁰¹ Jacques Derrida, *Positions*, trans. Alan Bass (London: The Athlone Press, 1987), p. 29. *Différance* is an elusive thought as it is “neither a word nor a concept” but a third party that separates being in time.

end of horizontal understanding of ethics”.²⁰² Relations are shown to exceed binary constructs, due to a third space present that withdraws the “irreducible ‘now’” as it dislocates presence.²⁰³ Thus, there is no origin. Ironically, Derrida highlights that fact that “Blanchot, unlike Emmanuel Levinas, analyses the neuter of the narrative voice where the ‘I’ “identifies itself”.²⁰⁴ Here the identification of the neuter and “I” takes place in “modern works that are their own commentary”, which strikingly resembles the “fabric of Jewish existence”. Moreover, Blanchot claims that the “power of the Word and of Exegesis is affirmed as lying at the beginning of everything; everything starts from a text and comes back to it”.²⁰⁵ In essence, the material book testifies to the fabric of existence, which is in itself a step back to the “real” world itself: “Yes. Presence without”²⁰⁶ This revelation comes to fruition in the limit-experience, which marks a circular turn from absence to presence: “To grasp the limits of reason . . . ‘God’ is the word for the great Yes to all things”.²⁰⁷ Thus knowledge of the absent author returns to the presence of “materiality” in the spirit bound to the book, which Kollias singles out in his analysis of Blanchot’s “Hegelian dictum”.²⁰⁸ Kollias points out that on the one hand: “Blanchot’s concept of materiality, the materiality of the word and of meaning, is concomitant with that of ‘life’ . . . the word’s life in meaning’s death”.²⁰⁹ In addition Kollias argues that Blanchot’s critical theory substantiates a return to ontology in the life of being in the everyday bound to the

²⁰² Richard Beardsworth, *Derrida and the Political* (London: Routledge, 1998), p. 132. Beardsworth argues that if there is “non-experience” of death or closure in regard to knowledge of being, then there is “no experience of responsibility” for the subject and this is “a thesis of considerable consequence”.

²⁰³ Derrida *A Taste for the Secret*, p. 12.

²⁰⁴ Jacques Derrida, *Demeure: Fiction and Testimony*, trans. Elizabeth Rottenberg (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), p. 3.

²⁰⁵ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 392.

²⁰⁶ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 309

²⁰⁷ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (London: Penguin Books, 1990), p. 184.

²⁰⁸ Kollias, “A Matter of Life and Death”, in *After Blanchot*, p. 129.

²⁰⁹ Kollias, “A Matter of Life and Death”, in *After Blanchot*, p. 129.

book: “the existence of words that carry the absence of existence in them. A certain form of existence, which it would not be precipitate to call a material existence”.²¹⁰

The relationship between the existence of being and the space of literature is a problem Blanchot highlights in the poetic experience of alterity that is seen at work in his reading of Kafka’s *The Trial*, *The Castle* and also his dairies.²¹¹ In his examination on Kafka’s “affliction”, Blanchot argues that Kafka, “sends us back endlessly to a truth outside of literature”.²¹² Blanchot pinpoints an ethical problem in the writer’s experience of “dying” in regard to existence separated in language: “We do not die, it is true, but because of that we do not live either; we are dead while we are alive”.²¹³ This thought exposes the inadequacy and power of language that comes to be seen as the ethical exegesis equal to death. He states: “To write is to make oneself the echo of what cannot cease speaking”.²¹⁴ At this point, Blanchot argues that words act like an “erosion” on being equal to the act of “suicide”, because the subject fails to get to truth. Here Blanchot makes use of Mallarmé’s poetic experience to discuss the space of death in this context, where the writer cannot find an origin in the word.²¹⁵ The more the subject searches for an origin, the more the exteriority comes to occupy the text, while the being-in-itself is hollowed out by the word that comes to embody totality. Here the destructive thought of negativity reaches its pinnacle in the death of being. However, once being is obliterated all that is left is pure spirit, which is stripped bare while a voice comes out and reveals itself in the repeated questioning of the self as a double, an omnipotent sign of the limit-experience. And this voice that remains at the limit to being unknown before the voice of the neuter is a testimony to

²¹⁰ Kollias, “A Matter of Life and Death”, in *After Blanchot*, p. 126.

²¹¹ Blanchot, *The Work of Fire*, pp.1-27.

²¹² Blanchot, *The Work of Fire*, p. 2.

²¹³ Blanchot, *The Space of Literature*, p. 284.

²¹⁴ Blanchot, *The Space of Literature*, p. 27.

²¹⁵ Blanchot, *The Space of Literature*, p. 43.

presence of spirit. The lack of a beginning is singled out in Blanchot's comparison of Zarathustra's prophesy on "being" in regard to Kafka's experience of writing at the limit: "'Write with blood,' said Zarathustra, 'and you will learn that blood is mind.' But it is the opposite that is true: one writes with the mind and one thinks one is bleeding".²¹⁶ This quote illustrates Blanchot's notion of "dying the death of the other", as he reverses perspectives to show absence embodies presence.²¹⁷ The "I" is the point in which spirit is resurrected in negative thought. Blanchot states that Kafka "chose to fulfill his spiritual and religious destiny in literature".²¹⁸ Here, the "writing becomes a form of prayer" for the artist that faces the "dead God" and also the dead self in the poetic mediation of destruction for being in alterity. Clearly, death enacts an artistic metamorphosis for the writer that implicates dying in literature as the other in language: "To die is thus to embrace the whole of time and to make of time a whole. It is temporal ecstasy".²¹⁹ Meanwhile, the writer is absent from the work, as he enters into a relation with infinity. Blanchot argues that "Kafka grasped the fecundity of literature . . . he felt literature was the passage from *Ich* to *Er*, from I to He".²²⁰ In this poetic identification, the double abyss of negativity emerges in being: "One . . . nothingness (the absence of God: the other is his own death)".²²¹ In addition, Blanchot argues that the negation of God is a search for God and this poetic odyssey not only recalls Joyce's exegesis on being in relation to literature, but also "the same movement that Georges Bataille translates when he questions being in literature".²²²

If we take a close look at Blanchot's dialectic of negativity that is put into practice in his reading of Georges Bataille's "inner-experience", we can see a critical

²¹⁶ Blanchot, *The Work of Fire*, p. 15.

²¹⁷ Blanchot, *The Space of Literature*, p. 91.

²¹⁸ Blanchot, *The Work of Fire*, p. 13.

²¹⁹ Blanchot, *The Space of Literature*, p. 164.

²²⁰ Blanchot, *The Work of Fire*, p. 21.

²²¹ Blanchot, *The Work of Fire*, p. 38.

²²² Blanchot, *The Work of Fire*, p. 294.

example of the “limit-experience” for being, in relation to the problem of alterity. Bataille describes his mystical inner experience as being a state of “NON-KNOWLEDGE” and “ECSTASY”.²²³ Here Blanchot emphasises experience at the limit as the subject faces a decentred other self before language, in the space of literature. He argues that after the subject is called into question in the wake of negativity, there is still something left over in the text that cannot be accounted for, akin to “dying”. This unknown presence is alterity. Blanchot borrows from Bataille the notion of the “negative unemployable” (*désœuvrement*) to exemplify the trace of an “excess” which cannot be counted.²²⁴ He then shows that the infinite limit to being illustrates the “impossibility of dying” as being looks at itself as an other, hence as a dead object from the exterior position of the question, in relation to language.²²⁵ The negative thought sees language in terms of an “absence” that oscillates between a vision that sees presence as absence, and absence as presence. More importantly, Blanchot recovers the lost “sacrificial now” present in the inner-experience that arises from the “unemployable vacancy”.²²⁶ Ironically this “effacing discourse” that responds to “negative thought” is “negation that has nothing more to negate”.²²⁷ And it is also theorised as a strange surplus of excess, which highlights the neuter coming to light. This fact occurs in Blanchot’s perception of negativity in being that proceeds “from question to question to the point where the question, pushed toward a limit becomes a response”.²²⁸ As such the response reveals presence of the sacred in the repetition of being that rewinds back as other in the space of language in a circle, winding over again in absence. This reading can be aligned to a theological

²²³ Georges Bataille, *Inner Experience*, trans. Anne Boldt (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1988), p. 52.

²²⁴ Hill, *Blanchot: Extreme Contemporary*, p. 118.

²²⁵ Derrida, *Demeure*, p. 26. Derrida argues: “One might be able to reduce ‘*différance*’ to “passion”.

²²⁶ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 206.

²²⁷ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 207.

²²⁸ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 108.

experience touching something hidden, which streams inside the text from the exteriority, of the Outside. This unknown presence coincides with Blanchot's observation of Bataille's inner-experience that portrays the horror at being-before-language as another that is separated, and self alienated with no exit.²²⁹ Indeed, Levinas' observation of Blanchot's negative thought of "there is" (*il y a*) describes a sense of horror for the being thrown into the abeyance of being before an unknown presence at the limit in language. Levinas claims: "Blanchot's work bathes in that atmosphere of a reality of the unreal—a presence of absence that is heavy, like the atmosphere after death" in dying.²³⁰ Indeed, Blanchot's reading of negativity transcends Hegelian self-consciousness as he recognises "something *like* a new origin" in Bataille's inner-experience; theorised at the theme of death.²³¹ Blanchot claims: "Death works with us in the world; it is a power that humanizes".²³² Yet, this thought revolves back to Nietzsche's theory of the "eternal return" in being, in the circle of fiction. Seen in this light, language is not "nothing", but "yes", an affirmation of being at the final limit, where there is no other but the material letter.

In light of the Blanchot's critical writings on the limit-experience at work in Nietzsche, Kafka, and Bataille, alongside his theory on "being Jewish", "the 'image'", the "symbol", "death", "dying", and "the neuter", there is a strong case for arguing that the dialectical thought of negativity can be used as a strategy for reading into the problem of alterity in Joyce's poetics too. And because this problem has not been fully explored, nor has Blanchot's input been given a chance to respond to this critical problem on Joyce, which not even Derrida or his critics have addressed adequately, there is a strong case for using Blanchot's work in particular, since he brings together

²²⁹ Levinas, *Proper Names*, p. 152.

²³⁰ Levinas, *Proper Names*, p. 152.

²³¹ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 209.

²³² Blanchot, *The Work of Fire*, p. 377.

the past and the present philosophers and critical theorists and novelists that have informed Joyce's work. Essentially, Blanchot brings together Joyce, Judaism, Derrida, Nietzsche, and Mallarmé.²³³ We know from Richard Ellmann that Joyce signed himself off as the prophet "James Overman", an ironic allusion to Nietzsche on the order of Mulligan's Toothless Kinch the Superman in *Ulysses*.²³⁴ So too, I shall argue that Joyce is the Overman that overcomes the absence of being in the poetics of literature as he responds to the problem of alterity. The significance of this argument lies in the fact that while Blanchot's thesis appears not to be about religion: "the question of God is not about religion", the theme of negativity in "Being Jewish" and Nietzsche's "death of God" speaks otherwise, just as it does in Joyce's *oeuvre*. Clearly, the more Joyce refuses unity in being, alterity speaks within the negative thought of literature that refuses to be damned, and this presence is bound to the book. Blanchot's work on the limit-experience is obsessed with writers in search of an origin in literature, but also writers obsessed with the first word in Genesis. It is here that Joyce falls into this same category, as he begins his vocation with a calling to the house of God before he faces a "religious tragedy". Blanchot argues that Stephen denies "two wisdoms": "I will not serve that in which I no longer believe".²³⁵ Indeed, Blanchot later argues: "to think God, is still to think of him as presence".²³⁶ This dialectic leads to the belief that "atheist is closer to God than the believer" as depicted in Blanchot's reading on the affliction of being separated before God's absence, which heralds negative theology. This is evident in the fact that while Blanchot states

²³³ Neil, R. Davidson, *James Joyce, Ulysses, and the Construction of Jewish Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 114. Davidson argues that Joyce is indebted to Nietzsche for his interpretation of being Jewish, which he sees arising from the "unmistakable link between 'Jewishness' and those representations of 'the Jew found throughout the philosopher's work'".

²³⁴ Richard Ellmann, *James Joyce: The First Revision of the 1959 Classic* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), 162.

²³⁵ Blanchot, "Le Premier roman de Joyce", in *Chroniques littéraires*, p. 607.

²³⁶ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 111.

alterity is about the “transcendence with the name of God”; he also firmly argues that there is no unity between the self and the other.²³⁷ Blanchot shows negative thought liberates being in the “absence present” that veers towards an unspeakable limit and this limit reveals itself in the neuter in Joyce. Indeed, the limit-experience will shed light on Joyce’s subject’s that face the horror of alienation, in the wake of separation in the word: “to love in him only his absence” is to create being in the space of nothingness.²³⁸ Here I propose to examine the problem of being in relation to the language of alterity, which begins with being that stands in relation to literature itself. This problem is a double relation as being questions language, and language questions being in turn in literature, which unfolds in the haunting narrative of Joyce’s poetics.

In Chapter One, the theme of “death” will be explored in subject’s “being” in relation to “language” in *Dubliners*; “The Sisters”, “An Encounter”, “Eveline”, “A Painful Case”, “Grace” and “The Dead”. The subjects called into question will also be examined through Blanchot’s notion of the “neuter”. The fragmented relationships expose aspects of Dublin life that presents the crisis of separation between man and man. Indeed, Joyce admits that he presents a “nicely polished looking-glass” of the “living-dead” (L 63). In “The Sisters”, the thought of death will be examined in the child’s inability to understand the unspeakable limit to being before “absence”, while the neuter calls the subject into question. In “An Encounter”, the subject’s desire for knowledge of the outside world will be examined in light of the neuter that acts like a mediator from within the narrative. In “Eveline”, the subject’s desire to escape into another world will be examined in the wake of the dead, as she faces the haunting presence of the neuter. In “A Painful Case”, Duffy’s experience of Mrs Sinico’s death will be examined, as he too is stalked by the neuter who calls him into question, while

²³⁷ Blanchot, *The infinite Conversation*, p. 174.

²³⁸ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 111.

judging his self-consciousness. In “Grace”, Kernan’s lack of faith will be examined in light of the neuter that puts his being on trial before God. And lastly, Gabriel’s being in relation to language will be examined in “The Dead”, as he too is called into question to answer for the dead. He faces the inability to grasp “what is” missing in the duplicity of language that haunts him. Each one of these subjects will be examined through Blanchot’s exegesis on negativity in the limit-experience that will shed light on the problem of alterity that unfolds in the parallel relations doubling in language.

In Chapter Two: *A Portrait of the Artist*, Stephen’s “being” in relation to language will be examined in accord with the negative thought of the “neuter”. Here Blanchot’s reading of Simone Weil’s trauma of “affliction” will help shed light on the investigation into Stephen’s being that faces the limit-experience, while doubling into the negation of alterity. Indeed, his being that is called into question by the neuter manifests itself in the exterior that tears his being apart from the narrative as he is put on trial. This trial emerges from childhood to adolescence beginning with a repetition of a doubling experience of images before the unknown word. It is here, so to speak, in the methodological trial, doubt and error that Stephen repeatedly questions the authenticity of the real experience. His broken glasses coincide with his image of faith that breaks up after he experiences conflicting images in the home life. His desire to know the real truth in just relations manifests itself into the image of dying in the wake of an absent God, as he repeatedly questions the word God. Indeed, Stephen’s affliction of being stricken with the impossibility of knowing the self in language before an absent image of God will be investigated in the odyssey, as he searches for righteousness. Here, his negative thought tries to justify error in the act of confession, which liberates his being before the power of the spoken word. However, his failure to commit to the religious order when asked, results in conflict and a fervid decision

to revolt against Christianity. Ironically, his desire to be an artist in the written poetics marks another relation with affliction as he experiences death in the space of literature.

In Chapter Three, Stephen's being in relation to language will be examined in *Stephen Hero* with the aid of Blanchot's dialectical thought of "negativity".²³⁹ His search for truth in the experience of language will be explored in his dialectical relations with Father Butt, McCann, Madden, Wells, Reverend Dillon, Temple, Cranly, Maurice, Isabel, his mother, and his father. Ostensibly, Stephen shows signs of exodus from the Christian faith as he revolts from the "myth" of Jesus.²⁴⁰ Here, Stephen's separation from Christianity leads to the dialectics of negative thought as he perpetually reverses perspectives, just as his being is called into question by the nameless face of the "neuter". Blanchot's writing on the neuter will be explored in regard to the question of language. In addition, his paradoxical theory behind "art and life" will be analysed in the twofold movement of questioning different positions, through his perpetual refusal of unity. Stephen's ethical response reaches a limit-experience as he faces "dying the death of the other" deflected back in Isabel's portrait. His dialectical thought suggests that he recognises his being bound to infinite separation, which feeds into the libertine's affliction. Here, he probes the limits to being before "the word of God" (*SH* 134). Moreover, his separation from the Catholic faith will be explored in the wake of his affliction experienced in his exodus from the Church: "I have left the Church" (*SH* 138). In turn, his ongoing quest for justice will be examined in his refusal to believe in a false idol and false morals. Indeed, the limits

²³⁹ Joyce said in his letters that he wanted to present in *Dubliners* "public life under four aspects: childhood, adolescence, maturity and public life". Thus, instead of following the sequence of narrative in history according to the year each book was published, I will examine *A Portrait* first, as it shows the growth of a child's mind to adolescence, and then I shall examine *Stephen Hero*, which shows the complexities of an adolescent mind maturing in relation to public life.

²⁴⁰ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 123.

to knowledge manifest in this response as he struggles to grasp “the responsibility of the human individual” as he searches for liberty in conflicting images of everyday life.

In Chapter Four, the problem of being in relation to “negativity” will be examined in *Ulysses* through Stephen’s being in relation to the “neuter”. I shall argue Stephen experiences a Nietzschean “eternal return” in relation to language. In “Scylla and Charybdis” Stephen begs the question, “what’s in a name” as he comes face to face with *Hamlet*’s experience of death. The problem of knowing the “origin” of the “dead author” will be explored in Stephen’s search for an origin in literature following his mother’s death. He probes the limits to presence as he questions the creator linked back to the dead author: “Who speaks . . . Who signs in the name of Hamlet?” Stephen begs to know the authenticity of the word, as he asks “who” is “here” and “now” in the “name Hamlet”. Is it Shakespeare? Is it a ghost? Or, is it the absence of the work? Blanchot states that “absence” may be the other name for “madness”.²⁴¹ However, Stephen’s desire to know the neuter that limits his presence in his thought constantly turns back to face death, as he experiences a doubling experience. His search for his maker in the word will be examined in his repeated attempts to seize the past, as he is thrown back to the “now, and the here, through which all future plunges to the past” in language itself (*U* 9.589). Moreover, his limit-experiences will be examined in his quest to reveal the hidden author that remains silent and off limits in the work of art, just like God who remains hidden when questioned in the book: “Art has to reveal to us ideas, formless spiritual essences. The supreme question about a work of art is out of how deep a life does it spring” (*U* 9.50). Stephen’s obsession with the maker of the word will be explored in his dialectical exegesis in the final question of being unto creation: “Who is the father of any son?”

²⁴¹ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 387.

In Chapter Five, Bloom's "difference in being" Jewish will be examined through his experience of separation in *Ulysses*. In addition, the "neuter" that calls his being into question in the language of alterity will be explored in regard to a limitless experience to being otherness. Derrida's writing on the dialectical "call" in "*Ulysses* Gramophone" will also be discussed as a means of shedding light on the language that questions the subject as other.²⁴² I shall explore Bloom's being that redoubles into a polyglot of portraits in difference, which stems from the question of language reduced to "duplicity" which adds to the problem of alterity.²⁴³ He is, so to speak, a "soap" of metamorphosis that slips and slides into the heroic Jewish Irish Overman. Indeed, the journey into Bloom's repetitive thought will be examined in the language that is pushed to the limits of knowledge, where negative thought unfolds into "moving limits" as depicted in "Cyclops". Here, the thought of the neuter that cuts between the dialogue of the subject and other relations will shed light on Bloom's limit-experiences that unfold into fragments. In "Circe", his hallucinations will be examined through the metamorphosis of changing faces that deflect multiple sides to an identity that springs from a "spiritual essence" that is an infinite "work of art". Here, the "limitless limits" to Bloom's being will be explored in the voices that put his presence on trial, as he faces the injustice of being the negative outsider, liar and thief. Indeed, Bloom's being bound to the "effacing discourse" runs in accord with Blanchot's theory of "dying the death of the other".²⁴⁴ Here his presence transgresses limits to "the infinite in the form of contestation" as he becomes a self-producer.²⁴⁵

In Chapter Six, Molly's being in relation to language will be examined in the problem of alterity that reveals itself in the "limit to presence" in *Ulysses*. The ethical

²⁴² Derrida, *Acts of Literature*, pp, 253-310.

²⁴³ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 163.

²⁴⁴ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 205.

²⁴⁵ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 205.

problem of infidelity and betrayal that unfolds in the deceptive nature of language will be explored in the language that doubles up in regard to the notion of the neuter. Indeed Molly's dialogue with the exterior breaks and makes her memory that acts like a textile cloth, while it weaves its own myth retelling her betrayal, and her tale of infidelity. Fragments of her dialogue will be analysed in relation to the memory that fails to locate an origin. Hence, the subject's presence will be examined in the language that presents the soliloquy in dialogue with the exteriority, which breaks into eight sentences. Molly's self-consciousness deflects the limit to experience in relation to Bloom's deviant sexual fantasies. Moreover, her adulterous thought feeds into the thought of "dying" depicted in the streaming language that flows from "continuous speech". This continuous speech will be explored in her repetitious acts of enunciation, as she reveals the "impossibility of death" in the "death of the other". I shall explore her being that rotates around one problem, the problem of capturing the real experience in self-questioning. Molly's response to the betrayal of being reveals an experience that circles around an "absence". Here the subject struggles to recapture the virginal experience of the first kiss with Bloom. Ironically, the voice speaking from "absence" retains the virginity of something untouchable and unknown in relation to the "neuter" that disappears into language. At this point her dialogue with the exteriority reaches a pinnacle to being at the final limit to being in alterity, which illuminates the problem of knowing "who" is speaking, where absence reigns".²⁴⁶

In Chapter Seven, the problem of "being" in relation to language will be explored in the "fragmentation" of images depicting HCE, Shem and Anna Livia Plurabelle (ALP) in the *Wake*. Blanchot's writings on "the fragment" in relation to being at the limit-experience will be examined as a means of exploring the problem of

²⁴⁶ Blanchot, *The Space of Literature*, p. 267.

alterity.²⁴⁷ Presence exposes itself as alterity at the cutting edge of the limit, as all identity disappears into all seen in the genesis of HCE. Indeed, his being shows that it is hard to “idendifine the individuone” (FW 51). Through a close reading of HCE’s wake the being of a “cropse” will be examined in relation to the “chain envelope” of “the litter” that shifts from fragment to difference. Indeed, Shem recalls Stephen’s affliction as he too searches for an origin in “what is” the word, as he faces death in being before a God “SHUT”. Here, the neuter presents Shem as a broken figure that creeps around corners, while forging other people’s identities. So too, Shem experiences the horror of his “pelagiarist pen” as he fails to experience the “JUSTIUS” of language. His being that is ripped apart will be examined in the neuter that puts the “dogpoet” on trial for “cuttlefishing every lie”. The limits to identity become limitless for ALP, as she dissolves into the sea of limitlessness symbols. Hence the subject ALP will be examined in the thought of death that presents broken leaves. Ultimately, the experience of “dying” is a disaster for the being bound to the question of literature: “I call the disaster that which does not have the ultimate for a limit”. This response will be examined as the reader becomes entrapped in the ethical return in being in the book that embodies the refusal to be silenced at the final limit. Now let us turn to Chapter One, as we examine the problem of alterity in *Dubliners*.

²⁴⁷ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 264.

CHAPTER ONE

The Experience of Death in *Dubliners*

“Man *is* starting from his death. He ties himself tight to his death with a tie of which he is judge. He makes his death; he makes himself mortal and in this way gives himself the power of a maker and gives to what he makes its meaning and its truth. The decision to be without being”.²⁴⁸

This chapter will examine the experience of “death” for “being” in relation to “language” in *Dubliners*. “The Sisters”, “An Encounter”, “Eveline”, “A Painful Case”, “Grace”, and “The Dead” will be examined in accord with Blanchot’s writing on the “neuter” and also the “limit-experience”, which will shed light on the problem of alterity.²⁴⁹ The limit to being in relation to the language of the neuter resembles Derrida’s notion of “*aporia*”, whereby the subject faces death in life as the subject questions existence before absence.²⁵⁰ Absence of presence leads to negative thought for each subject that is called into question. Here, the language of negative thought is tied to the subject’s “affliction” that attests to a spiritual malaise. Being is literally carried beyond the limits of truth in the experience of being doubled over by language. Levinas argues that every discourse is an ethical discourse, which he perceives in the “‘epiphany’ of *autrui*” (the other)²⁵¹. Indeed, he proceeds to argue that truth is found in language, which ironically is a double relation: “We call justice this face to face approach, in conversation”.²⁵² However, Blanchot argues that every relation with language is an irreducible relation with the neuter that harbours a relation which is

²⁴⁸ Blanchot, *The Space of Literature*, p. 96.

²⁴⁹ The problem of alterity is also present in “Araby”, “After the Race”, “Two Gallants”, “The Boarding House”, “A Little Cloud”, “Counterparts”, “Clay”, and “A Mother”. However, there is no space to explore each text. Therefore, prominent texts will explore less content and give more analysis.

²⁵⁰ Derrida, *Aporias*, p. 3.

²⁵¹ Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, p. 69.

²⁵² Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, p. 71.

essentially an “impossible relation”.²⁵³ Ostensibly, the neuter is a silent third party that stalks relations, while it usurps the subject’s presence in a curvature of space, tied to language itself. Moreover, Blanchot claims that this “‘curvature of this space’ is perhaps the presence of God”.²⁵⁴ Moreover, the subject is doubled over in the discourse of the narrative, presented by the hidden face of the neuter, which cuts in between relations from the outside. The “Outside” is linked back to the faceless neuter that is reminiscent of Levinas’ *there is* (“*il y a*”), the “excluded middle”, unknown space of alterity.²⁵⁵ The relation between the self and other subjects reveal that being in relation to totality is not possible, even in the reversal of positions due to the space of alterity, which disrupts relations as a third voice. The problem of alterity will be examined in the subject’s experience with language, as each being is called into question by the neuter. Here, the presence of the neuter will be traced from the narrator’s perspective on being that dispossesses the subject’s after they face an “impossible passage” to being in unity as they are doubled over.²⁵⁶ As such, the dialectic of being in negativity unfolds in the dialogue of the neuter that presents an ethical problem: “a relation without relation . . . the relation of the one to the other”.²⁵⁷

Accordingly, Blanchot claims that the neuter can be seen as another subject that acts like a critic or even God. He argues that language comes from a space that is outside and separate to being in lived experience. In fact, Blanchot calls the neuter “divine”, because it is beyond human comprehension coming from the exteriority, “speaking from nowhere”.²⁵⁸ Ironically, he argues that the space of the neuter doubles up into a theological pretext, even though it excludes religion. Admittedly, Blanchot

²⁵³ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 55.

²⁵⁴ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 56.

²⁵⁵ Levinas, *Proper Names*, p. 155.

²⁵⁶ Derrida, *Aporias*, p. 8.

²⁵⁷ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 73.

²⁵⁸ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 386.

rethinks being in relation to the neuter in terms of a negative theology: “religion without religion”.²⁵⁹ He argues that God is infinitely separate to man. This thought shares similar traits with Derrida’s writing on the “*aporia*” of “time” that can be traced back to “Aristotle’s famous text, *Physics IV* (217b)”.²⁶⁰ The question of the *aporia* is the “concern” for the presence or “property” of “one’s life” at the final limit. The thought of the *aporia* runs in accord with the thought of separation that is present in the Jewish context of being in relation to the “negative” other. The negative other cannot be known in the logic of “permanent absence”.²⁶¹ Here, the Jewish subject’s relation to negativity begins with the ethic of “separation *from*” and “dedication *to*” an absent God,²⁶² because separation in negative thought grounds human rights in just relations.²⁶³ This ethic is put into practice in the Jewish method of reading the Torah, which resembles the neuter’s method of interpreting each subject’s experience of being a double. Essentially, the Jewish method of teaching the Torah begins with the “Midrash” which derives from the “Hebrew root meaning ‘to repeat’”.²⁶⁴ The Midrash method of repetition involves investigating the text through secondary interpretation in the form of an exigency. The Midrash method attempts to “search after” hidden meaning in the text by reading against the grain, while orally “seeking out God’s will”.²⁶⁵ It is in the act of questioning being that the affirmation of presence stems. Gerald B. Bruns notes that for Blanchot the neutral language of being separated is an ethical thought, rather than conceptual, because man’s relation is justified in relation

²⁵⁹ John D. Caputo and Michael, J. Scanlon, *God, The Gift, and Postmodernism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), p. 4.

²⁶⁰ Derrida, *Aporias*, p. 13.

²⁶¹ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 100.

²⁶² Epstein, *Judaism*, p. 23.

²⁶³ Epstein, *Judaism*, p. 20.

²⁶⁴ Epstein, *Judaism*, p. 114.

²⁶⁵ David Stern, “Midrash and Jewish Interpretation”, in *The Jewish Study Bible*, ed. Adele Berlin and Marc Zvi Brettler (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 1863.

to the negative aspect of otherness, which opens up the alterity of language.²⁶⁶ The alterity of language reveals itself in the turn “towards the Thing not to be found”.²⁶⁷ Ira B. Nadel asserts that “from Judaism Joyce accepted the rabbinic doctrine that language was not divided from being”.²⁶⁸ Ironically, the Jewish doctrine argues that “thou shalt make no idol” before God.²⁶⁹ Thus, the text is the primary source of becoming that inhabits the subject as a double: “meaning does not reside behind, or above, but in the text”.²⁷⁰ Meaning is reconstructed in the origin of being in language.

God’s absent presence is critical for understanding the problem of alterity for the Dubliner subjects. Indeed, the subject forms no unity with the other man in the space of language, because being is infinitely separated from language in the “resemblance, of imitation”.²⁷¹ The more the subject tries to get to the problem of being in language; he is pushed beyond the limit. If we take a closer look at the narrative on being seen by the neuter, the subject that is doubled as an other can be approached byway of the subject’s experience of affliction, “for affliction removes God”.²⁷² Indeed, the neuter occupies the space of language from the outside, which merges with the interpretation of the silent dialogue played out behind a dark curtain: “God sovereignty of the neutral, in relation to being always in excess, empty of meaning, and through this emptiness separate from all meaning”.²⁷³ Alain Toumayan notes that among “the characteristics of the space of the neuter now inhabited by the narrator are a proximity to death and the description of an existence that seems

²⁶⁶ Bruns, *Maurice Blanchot*, p. 218.

²⁶⁷ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 89.

²⁶⁸ Ira B. Nadel, *Joyce and the Jews* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1996), p. 123.

²⁶⁹ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 434.

²⁷⁰ Nadel, *Joyce and the Jews*, p. 124.

²⁷¹ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 89.

²⁷² Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 122.

²⁷³ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 303-04.

invested or haunted by death, or is experienced as dying”.²⁷⁴ The significance of the neuter’s presence in relation to death can also be compared to the “mediator” who interprets the end of time by Gabriel in “The Book of Daniel”.²⁷⁵ More significantly, Gabriel faces the image of the name Michael, meaning like God, as he ushers forth the negative thought of being on trial at death in the last book of judgment, or more importantly, being before death, played out in the act of dying. Here, the thought of dying emerges for the being that exists in the tomb of language while alive. This fact runs in accord with the self that can only know being in relation to the difference of language that is a double, as being in language is exchanged as a gift in becoming.²⁷⁶ Accordingly for the Jew, life begins with the silent breath of the everyday that is the utmost sacred, because even the most banal word is also “what is most important if it brings us back to existence” in the tomb—letter in the book.²⁷⁷ For Blanchot the “current of life” that is lived in the everyday letter is structured around the “sovereignty of the neutral”, which manifests into the “shibboleth effect: it always exceeds meaning”.²⁷⁸ This explains why being is a fragmented part of a broken relation. Here the negative thought refuses all unity in order to reconstruct meaning. The contemporary image is now a fragment that exists in relation to the incomplete text.²⁷⁹ Bearing in mind the dialectic of negativity and being in relation to death, we shall turn to the dialogue between the neuter and the subjects that face the limit to life.

In “The Sisters” the narrative voice of the neuter states that “there was no hope for him this time: it was the third stroke” (*D* 1). But then, the narrator becomes the witness of a “bio-anthropo-thanato-theological” encounter as the word “I” appears to

²⁷⁴ Alain Toumayan, “The Haunted House of Being”, in *Clandestine Encounters: Philosophy in the Narratives of Maurice Blanchot*, ed. Kevin Hart (Indiana: University of Notre Dame, 2010), pp. 164-65.

²⁷⁵ Berlin and Brettler, *The Jewish Study Bible*, p.1665.

²⁷⁶ Caputo and Scanlon, *God, The Gift, and Postmodernism*, p. 3.

²⁷⁷ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 239.

²⁷⁸ Derrida, *Aporias*, p. 10.

²⁷⁹ , Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 308.

turn back, as time is arrested in the limit to experience: “Night after night I had passed the house” (*D 1*).²⁸⁰ A negative dialectics opens the discourse as something described in the present is immediately overturned and erased with the negative word “no”. Time is portrayed as a movement doubling back upon itself in repetition. The sense of time repeating itself begins at “this time”, but then “this time” turns around again as night time turns back in space. Here we can stop to note a disjunctive doubling taking place at the threshold. The subject returns “night after night” and “night after night” to examine the opening of the house. He peers through a “window” to look in as an outsider, while he is reflected back as a double. The window becomes a leitmotif for the separation of being that is bound to the exteriority of language. This thought emerges from each image that is seen as a fragment of a larger part of the past scene that begins to unfold through a movement of looking out, turning back, while crossing over. This haunting effect gives the reader a sense of being estranged in the repetition. The subject wonders if the subject is dead or alive as he imagines a “corpse” in a room with “two candles”. Here we can begin to take note that the imagery doubles up again into a twofold movement, repeating each thought. However, when the subject recalls the words, “I am not long for this world”, he also remembers a “memorial”. His memory that is in effect mourning, interrupts the commentary that is in essence like a “(memorial) of being” crossed out by death.²⁸¹ His fabrication of commentary leads to an encounter of the limit-experience for the subject that says the word “*paralysis*”, which in turn is associated with the word “*gnomon*”, and also the word “simony” (*D 1*). These three words conjure up images of an omnipotent presence that interrupts the fabric of self-consciousness that is now at a limit. Indeed, the subject is in fact aware that it too is being watched and called into question by the space of

²⁸⁰ Derrida, *Aporias*, p. 79.

²⁸¹ Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1997), p. xv.

absence that is missing from the text, coming from outside. The negative space that is absent is polarised, as Marian Eide notes in the “parallelogram extracted from the gnomon”²⁸². The absent space takes on a form of presence linked to the temptation of evil for being before death that harbours a secret. Here, the first paragraph presents a problem that stigmatises the subject that faces a call from the presence of language, Rabaté points out: “Silence can finally appear as the end, the limit, the death”.²⁸³

Roles reverse as the dead presence of Father Flynn is resurrected in the life of the mind of the subject’s memory that sees a flash of light in the dark. The memory that is woven in the simulacrum of the resurrected images in the self-consciousness fails to weave together a complete totality of the past experience. Derrida claims that the memory is like a fabric of cloth, woven together by threads of tissue that resemble a “transparent sheet”.²⁸⁴ The “re-appropriation of negativity” is linked to patches of language basted and sewn “on to the outside” that cannot “bind the textile tightly” no matter how firm memory is reconstructed.²⁸⁵ This is evident in the subject’s encounter with the limit to experience in being before death. Hence, the gaps of silence in the dialogue that separate the commentary culminate into an unspoken subplot of the negative unsaid, “he was exactly . . . but there was something queer . . . there was something uncanny” (*D 1*). This secondary absent text missing from the written fabric of the text alludes to the “nihilist” connotation that Eide also associates with the word “*aporia*”.²⁸⁶ The *aporia* is the “threshold” to knowledge that arrests and interrupts the passage to the other.²⁸⁷ It may be argued that the *aporia* actually opens up the unknown dialogue with the thought of alterity that offers the reader infinite possible

²⁸² Eide, *Ethical Joyce*, p. 37.

²⁸³ Rabaté, “Silence in Dubliners”, in *James Joyce New Perspectives*, p. 45.

²⁸⁴ Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, p. 55.

²⁸⁵ Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, p. xiii.

²⁸⁶ Eide, *Ethical Joyce*, p. 31.

²⁸⁷ Derrida, *Aporias*, p. 12.

readings of the text. This thought explains why it is impossible to die as such and where the space of alterity opens up the thought of not being able to die at the limit. Ironically, Derrida argues that “a plural logic of the *aporia* stems from the fact that there is no limit”.²⁸⁸ Thus, the refusal to establish the real truth of the event is registered as being unspeakable, just like dying in the absent text: “one of those . . . peculiar cases . . . But it’s hard to say . . .” (*D* 2). Meanwhile, other characters suggest that the subject had “too much” education. Indeed, education comes to signify negative thought: “When children see things like that, you know, it has an effect . . .” (*D* 3). Subsequently, the reader is not told exactly what “that” excess of knowledge consists of being. Here the absent text takes on a form of presence again. It is important to note that the negative thought of absence actually opens up the reading against the grain. Ironically, the negative effect of seeing the dead in the dark haunts the subject as a ghost in a dream. The subject senses the torment of guilt in the frozen face of “paralysis” that is arrested in time. It should also be noted that the ghost “began to confess” to him. However, the child is incapable of grasping the real truth in the “murmuring voice” of the priest that confesses to a sin, which remains an unknown secret of “his sin”. It silently stalks him in the memory of being dead (*D* 3).

The child returns to the front of the house for a second time, in search of his missing companion only to discover that he is absent. The memory of the subject reconstructs dead images of the corpse as he imagines the “trembling hands” spilling snuff, while teaching him mysteries of the “Church”, including the “secrecy of the confessional” (*D* 5). The subject then returns to his previous dream scene as he searches for a conclusion to events, in hope of finding an answer to his afflicted mind that questions death in the face of absence. However, the subject fails to do so as the

²⁸⁸ Derrida, *Aporias*, p. 20.

“ghost” of the negative subplot haunts the text as a double that runs parallax to the fiction on the exterior.²⁸⁹ Hill notes that this type of encounter can be understood as “affirming” presence and “withdrawing” it doubly “at the very same time”, while affirming the game of negation in being before death, which is seen as “some sort of mystified, negative entity that was a source of value”.²⁹⁰ This double crossing over, unfolds over into the experience of mourning in the house, as the sisters find the subject of death increasingly unspeakable, and unjustifiable as words fail to answer for the dead: “Did he . . . peacefully” (*D* 7). But for the child, a spiritual insight into the unsaid is explored beneath the surface as fleeting images of absence leave patches of memory shrouded in doubt. The dead images appear to affirm a suspect vision. The child feels comfort in resurrecting the dead image in his memory, while the sisters feel afflicted with sympathy for the dead priest as they repeatedly cry “poor James”. While “silence” takes “possession of the room” and the sinful encounter with the “chalice” is blamed for the “queer” behaviour of the dead priest’s downfall, a revelation unfolds. The reader is told that the “affected mind” of the priest results in signs of madness. This is not directly spoken, but signified by the dead, “laughing to himself”, while onlookers note that “something” is “wrong” (*D* 10). The dead image of the priest is experienced by the child twofold, as the missing object takes possession of his secret knowledge, while the sisters fail to comprehend the problem of God and death. The final encounter of absence is seen as the cause of something “wrong” remaining a question for God, “laughing . . . to himself” in a “confession box” (*D* 10). The repetition of events reinforces the plural logic of being before death;

²⁸⁹ Roughley, *Reading Derrida Reading Joyce*, p. 10.

²⁹⁰ Hill, *Radical Indecision*, p. 185.

dying in limitless possibilities as the unspoken dialogue recaptures loss at the limit.²⁹¹ Strikingly, the “possible then is an empty frame” linked back to death in language.²⁹²

In an “Encounter,” the problem of language undermines the protagonists experience with the limit to being in relation to death. Joe Dillon is described as a hero for choosing “priesthood” as a “vocation”. However, it becomes pertinent that the power of literature and the force of language predominates the discourse that presents “some sort of mystified negative entity”.²⁹³ Language is according to Blanchot, “the movement of stealing and turning away”.²⁹⁴ The subject describes the thrilling “adventures related in the literature of the Wild West”, alongside the desire to “escape” into another real world. Interestingly, the power of literature is seen as a corrupt medium by the preachers that deem fiction as a sinister threat to their religious order, while they seek to repress the young, impressionable minds. The priest demands to know “what” is being read by the students: “What is this rubbish . . . wretched scribble” (*D* 12). Father Butler then threatens the boy with an unspeakable punishment . . . (for reading) such stuff” (*D* 12). Ironically, the threat that is regarded as corrupt is missing in the context of absence, which opens up infinite readings. Moreover, the reader is told that if they had been “National school boys” he would have “understood” their bad taste in literature. The juxtaposition of fact and fiction for the children suggests that there is a dialectical exegesis unfolding. Here language lies hidden behind the realm of truth lying in literature. Accordingly, the priest’s doctrine perceives the religious order to be opposed to the fictional world of literature. It is in this context that the church’s laws are deemed good and fiction is perceived as morally evil, because of the liberty to think freely inside fiction. The consequence of

²⁹¹ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 41.

²⁹² Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 41.

²⁹³ Hill, *Radical Indecision*, p. 185.

²⁹⁴ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 23.

reading about exciting adventures present in the life of fiction manifests itself into the boy's desire to escape into a day of "minching". The subject confesses: "I began to hunger again for wild sensations, for the escape which those chronicles of disorder alone seemed to offer me" (*D* 12). Ironically, the restraints of Christian thought manifests itself into the desire to experience real life in the outside world. The significance of the boys escape into the open field leads to a limit-experience, whereby the boy encounters an obscure man that calls his being into question. Ironically, the subject's search for truth leads to loss of liberty in the negative thought of being bound to the spoken word: "Speech is this turning. Speech is the place of dispersion, disarranging and disarranging itself, dispersing and dispersing itself".²⁹⁵

The boy meets a "queer old jossler" of a stranger who asks him if he is interested in "poetry". Blanchot argues that "questioning places us in relation with what evades every question".²⁹⁶ Indeed, the literature of the everyday that is regarded as a sign of empowerment stigmatises the subject as he faces the other. While the stranger boasts of his book collection, the narrator facing him silently begins to analyse the great "gaps in his teeth". Here we now have two dialogues proceeding on two slopes of the discourse. The first slope is being in relation to the spoken and the second being in relation to the unsaid. Ironically, the two subjects sit on the "slope" of the question and answer as they face each other. The stranger then begins to inquire about the boy's love interest, or "sweetheart" as he questions whether or not "every boy . . . has a little sweetheart" (*D* 17). The subject analyses and questions the stranger's dialogue in return: "His attitude on this point struck me as strangely liberal in a man of his age" (*D* 17). It is evident that the unspoken dialogue fills in the gaps of silence in the form of an *aporia*, which recalls the "shibboleth effect that exceeds meaning" into

²⁹⁵ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 23.

²⁹⁶ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 21.

limitlessness thought.²⁹⁷ There appears to be something unknown “lying beyond the limits of language”.²⁹⁸ Notably, the subject proceeds to state that he “disliked the words in his mouth and I wondered why he shivered once or twice as if he feared something” (*D* 18). Language becomes a centrifugal force for the subject that notices that the man is then “magnetised by some words of his own speech” (*D* 18). However, it should be pointed out that the thought from the exterior remains unsaid. The subject is influenced by the presence of the words coming out of the strangers mouth, as sounds begin to circle “round and round in the same orbit”. The repeated phrases seduce the subject that listens to the call from the foreigner as the external dialogue is suspended. Subsequently, after leaving and returning for a second time a repetition of the encounter unfolds for the subject that envisions his presence “magnetised again by his speech”. He notes that language begins to “circle slowly round and round its new centre” (*D* 19). Here we can see how structure rotates around a circular loop of absence: “Within this circle the meaning of what is and of what is said is indeed still given, but from a withdrawal, from a distance”.²⁹⁹ The story has repeated as a double. The neuter then interrupts the dialogue, for the neuter arrests his being and awakens him to the shame and betrayal of a “paltry stratagem”. The subject in question now registers the unspoken feeling of being victimised by a stranger. The subject awakens to the unspoken thoughts of the other that faces his being before alterity. The problem of alterity is registered in the twofold experience of being bound to language itself.³⁰⁰

In “Eveline”, the neuter dons a “sacerdotal cloak and hides behind the clouds” of the spoken fabrication of the narrative, as he silently judges the subject’s different possibilities. Eveline is depicted as an outsider in her own home as she peers out the

²⁹⁷ Derrida, *Aporias*, p. 10.

²⁹⁸ Hill, *Blanchot: Extreme Contemporary*, p. 151.

²⁹⁹ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 380.

³⁰⁰ Eide, *Ethical Joyce*, p. 38. Here Eide argues the subject is both “frame and content” in the narrative.

window as a double. The neuter fills in the gaps of commentary, as he recollects past associations of her being part of the negative images that are dusted together to show a bleak portrait of a woman surrounded by fragments of alienation, loss, and death. Here the being that is called into question appears “no longer to have its centre in itself but Outside itself—in the neutral”.³⁰¹ The thought of being held hostage by language begins after we are told Tizzie Dunn and the Waters are gone. The images of absent relations bring the neuter to the attention that the subject can now be regarded as an absent presence in the home, while recollecting the dead. The thought of death feeds into the haunting nature of alterity. Indeed, the memory in mourning glances at the interior of her home, while the neuter reviews the unfamiliarity of “all its familiar objects”. The neuter takes into account the image of dust collected with images of negative thoughts that are calculated, while recalling time turning around, just as she resurrects the dead missing in places (*D* 29). Eveline is described as coming towards a conflict of being divided at a limit, while she fervently alienates the past from the present. The neuter puts her being into question to ask: “Was that wise?” (*D* 30) The narrative doubles up on the subject’s actions in the space of silence and not in her own mind as it names the subject as another object: “she tried to weigh each side of the question” (*D* 30). Here we can see the neuter takes on the role of God, while leaving behind “the print of the creator’s thumb as he shapes figures to his liking”.³⁰² Indeed the neuter tells the reader that Eveline has already made her mind up and had “consented to go away”, thus the problem that has not been resolved by the subject. Eveline encounters affliction of indecision. The old home that is foreign to the subject is contrasted with the other new home that offers a vision of “another life”. The neuter then brings to light the reasons why the subject needs to rethink her planned secret life

³⁰¹ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 13.

³⁰² Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 382.

to come, while she is on the brink of acting out her escape with Frank to a new life. Eveline now calculates her present position that exists in relation to each living family member that is present and absent before she decides to run. However, the act of recognising different positions in the home attests to the thought of moral responsibility, even though she remains conflicted as to where her real obligation lies.

The memory of Eveline's past life in the home doubles back to the image of the window for a second time, just as the subject senses time is "running out". It is clear that Eveline is afflicted by the power of negative thought that uproots her existence as she stands before affliction: "Affliction has a relation to time. Through affliction we endure 'pure' time, time without event, without project and without possibility; a kind of empty perpetuity".³⁰³ Indeed, dust reappears for a second time, together with the dead ashes of time not passing. Time is repeating over in the suspense of memory that recovers and forgets the dead. Being is put at stake in negative thought while it is estranged and separated by the force of language. It is clear that moral responsibility divides the subject that is haunted by the "promise to her dead mother". Looking back, Eveline is asked to make a decision while waiting in the "emptiness of thought".³⁰⁴ Time appears to come off its hinges as time is "without event".³⁰⁵ The neuter notes a problem: "Strange that it should come that very night to remind her of the promise to her mother, her promise to keep the home together" (*D* 32-33). The subject is asked to respond to the obligation to look after her father and the "two young remaining children" (*D* 31). The dead mother's ghost stigmatises the subject that is pushed to the limit and "deprived of the I".³⁰⁶ However, while her self-consciousness is denied presence through the narrative of the neuter that doubles up

³⁰³ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 121.

³⁰⁴ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 121.

³⁰⁵ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 121

³⁰⁶ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 121.

on the doubt, the other part of her being recognises that she is in effect an actual “stranger to the self”. It is evident that the “intervention of the narrator” challenges “the very possibility of narration . . . that is an essentially critical one”.³⁰⁷ This is depicted in the image of the split subject that yearns to “escape” the misery of being held captive. But indecision of indeterminacy leads to further “loss of a dwelling place” in the doubling language spoken by the neuter.³⁰⁸ Once again, the neuter interrupts: “Why should she be happy?” Like a judge the critic questions the subject’s acts through the narrative of alterity. Seen in this light Eveline is already entrapped in death, as another. Nevertheless, once Eveline arrives at the station, she is unable to act out, due to her fear of the unknown and trial of judgement: “her cheek pale and cold and, out of a maze of distress she prayed to God to direct her” (*D* 33). However, there is no answer from God, because he is absent. Not knowing which path to follow, Eveline is traumatised by the fear of the unknown. She is not able to act when given the chance to take a risk and take a leap of faith and escape. Thus, she remains immobile and captive, while self-imprisoned: “No! No! No it is impossible . . . like a helpless animal” (*D* 34). Eveline chooses to sacrifice her liberty and freedom as she succumbs to the fear of God’s absent presence, which is shown in her inability to act.

In retrospect, while Mr James Duffy acknowledges the moral tragedy, in the act of suicide for the subject named Sinico in “A Painful Case”, he himself refuses to be responsible for the death of the other, even though his afflicted self-consciousness speaks otherwise. The subject’s confrontation with death ushers in the haunting nature of alterity that stalks the subject. The reader is told that Duffy is an odd character insofar as he is isolated, and living alone remotely outside of Dublin with no companions. He has a strange manner of regarding himself as seen in the “odd

³⁰⁷ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 382.

³⁰⁸ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 122.

biographical habit . . . containing a subject in the third person” (*D* 104) His only joy in life appears to be his interest in the materiality of books and music, but not with people. However, after he meets Mrs Sinico on an “empty bench” at a music concert, he becomes increasingly infatuated with her presence. Indeed, there is an acute sense of both individuals being singled out as estranged subjects, dissatisfied with their lives until they meet each other. Mrs Sinico appears to fill a void in Duffy’s character traits as she “emotionalised his mental life”. Interestingly, he still remains detached from her being as his mind regresses back to the priority of his own being. This fact shows that he still feels the distance that separates them. He is spied upon by the neuter that tells us that he was shown to be “listening to the sound of his own voice” (*D* 107). Nevertheless, the more he becomes “attached” to Sinico’s presence, the more he feels his “soul’s incurable loneliness”. The separation that exists in their relationship reaches a turning point as he tries to justify the reason why her being fails to fulfil the lack that he experiences when he is with her: “We cannot give ourselves, it said: we are our own” (*D* 107). However, Mrs Sinico’s desire to close the space of distance in their relation results in him ending the relation. This act has a dire consequence on the woman that “began to tremble so violently” (*D* 108). In due course, Mr Duffy appears to forget her during the four years that follow their separation. Meanwhile, the neuter makes a note of the fact that the subject has shelved “two volumes by Nietzsche: *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* and *The Gay Science*” (*D* 108). This observation alludes to Zarathustra’s theory that “God is dead”; whereby the prophet asks his reader to question a reversal of moral perspectives in order to justify life before death.³⁰⁹ Likewise, in *Twilight of the Idols*, Nietzsche “explains his suspicion with regard to language” that feeds into the suspect relation to being. Duffy comes to experience the

³⁰⁹ Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, p. 41.

problem of language: “Each time we speak . . . there is an error of being”.³¹⁰ It is the neuter’s prying into the subject’s interest in Nietzsche’s metaphysics and the subject’s calculated thought, which highlights the trauma of facing being before death in life.

The subject’s confrontation with death in life is first relayed to the reader by the neuter: “DEATH OF A LADY AT SYDNEY PARADE” (*D* 109). Indeed, the subtitle that reads the words “A PAINFUL CASE” can be interpreted as a response to Duffy’s limit-experience, because the corruption or contamination of life by death reveals that being is never dead enough. This thought can be illustrated in Blanchot’s notion of the disaster, whereby: “the impossibility of death, it is the mockery thrown on all humankind’s great subterfuges, night, nothingness, silence”.³¹¹ It is clear that the impact of Mrs Sinico’s death on Duffy manifests itself into shock, because he has to reread the article twice after the neuter presents it to the reader. Due to his disbelief at confronting the possibility that she is really dead and not just an imaginary, absent ghost, time stops. Duffy is “struck with death, so as to become the reality of the name; the life of this death”.³¹² Here, he confronts the limit to being. After reading that the cause of death is suicide, the neuter starts to interrogate the subject with further questions. He senses a lack of moral duty as he watches the subject recoil in disgust at the decision to kill the gift of life: “The whole narrative of her death revolted him and it revolts him to think that he had ever spoken to her of what he held sacred” (*D* 111). But then the neuter states: “Not merely had she degraded herself; she had degraded him . . . His soul’s companion” (*D* 111). At this point, it is important to note that the voice speaking faces the thought of a double death: “Just God, what an end! Evidently she had been unfit to live, without any strength of purpose, an easy prey to habits, one of the wrecks on which civilisation has been reared” (*D* 112). But ironically, the

³¹⁰ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 166.

³¹¹ Blanchot, *The Work of Fire*, pp. 7-8.

³¹² Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 36.

neuter probes further: “Was it possible he had deceived himself so utterly about her?” (D 112) The experience of death manifests itself into an all consuming presence for the subject that now faces her absence as something treacherous, which consumes his negative thought as it begins to exclude “immediate presence”: “He sat there, living over his life with her and evoking alternately the two images in which he now conceived her, he realised that she was dead, that she had ceased to exist, that she had become a memory” (D 112). His memory brings back the dead image of the woman, doubly dead and “radically absent, a presence in its presence always infinitely other, presence of the other in its alterity”.³¹³ The thought of the “two images” colliding make him feel divided, as he refuses to accept the possibility that her death is resurrected in his memory. Indeed, he recognises that her presence is still present in the absence of the word that leaves behind a corpse: “the word is the absence of that being, its nothingness, what is left of it”.³¹⁴ The neuter asks: “How was he to blame?” The thought of her being dead is envisaged in the memory that is deflected back in the thought that he too will be a dead memory, only if “anyone remembered him” (D 113).

Sinico’s death continues to take on an all consuming haunting presence for the subject as the absent other “seemed to be near him in the darkness” (D 113). The experience of death is questioned over again in time, as the neuter demands an ethical response from the subject: “Why had he sentenced her to death?” (D 113) The neuter then encounters a crisis in the “moral nature falling to pieces”. But this happens only after the woman is dead. Yet while Sinico is alive Duffy fails to show any signs of being responsible for her being or for the consequences of his actions after he leaves her. He thought of her being alive and not in death. In turn, the neuter notes that in the past, “he had denied her life and happiness: he had sentenced her to ignominy, a death

³¹³ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 38.

³¹⁴ Blanchot, *The Work of Fire*, p. 322.

of shame” (*D* 113). The neuter judges Duffy because of his decision to end his relationship with the other. But is Duffy really responsible for Sinico’s death? Heath argues: “Joyce’s critique is not moral but self-reflective”.³¹⁵ It is important to note, the fragment of the portrait reveals only one side to the relationship that harbours an infinite number of other possible sides. Nevertheless, the irony of the perception of memory that harbours the twofold image of the dead is resurrected in the doubled portrait, which contains the secondary picture of the absent “thing” in itself, as formulated in Blanchot’s concept of dialectical “negativity”.³¹⁶ Each still of an “image” captured by the memory is a reflection of the dead corpse left behind after the lived experience. Blanchot argues that each image that portrays the dead shows being resurrected in the metaphor of dying. Dying unfolds into a case of dying the “death of the other”, because the subject that is dead cannot experience their own “death *as such*”.³¹⁷ Here, we stop to take note that thought pushed to the extreme limit leads to the impossibility of death as shown in the “impossible dying”.³¹⁸ Thus, while Duffy hears the “syllables of her name”, he refuses to speak her name, as he represses the dead from his memory. Here he distances himself from the affliction of “death in life”.³¹⁹ In speaking her name he calls her back to life, thus he refuses the final call to say her name in death. It is precisely in the act of naming that she is doubly dead, and resurrected. Thus she is dead, but present in absence. Ironically, Duffy listens in the “darkness” as he hears “nothing” in all that is, “perfectly silent”. Now Sinico is critically “more dead than absent,” just like dead Anne in *Thomas the Obscure*.³²⁰ Moreover, she occupies infinity in the gift of the name that has no body attached to

³¹⁵ Heath, “Ambiviolences”, in *Post-Structuralist Joyce*, p. 36.

³¹⁶ Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, p. 176.

³¹⁷ Derrida, *Aporias*, p. 37.

³¹⁸ Derrida, *Aporias*, p. 77.

³¹⁹ Van Boheemen-Saaf, *Joyce, Derrida, Lacan, and the Trauma of History*, p. 15.

³²⁰ Maurice Blanchot, “Thomas the Obscure”, trans. Robert Lamberton in *The Station Hill Blanchot Reader* (Barrytown: Station Hill Press, 1988), p. 104.

presence, while non-existent, in language: “He listened again: perfectly silent. He felt that he was alone” (*D* 114). The irony is that he too is entombed in death in the silent space of language re-written as other. He is never fully present in the letters that bring his being back to life, thus he is dying in language. Considered in this light, language “signifies the possibility of this destruction”.³²¹ In accord, being presents itself in the words of alterity itself: “looming up like an unknown thing . . . (in) the trail of ink”.³²²

The complex problem of accounting for the separation of being in relation to language in “Grace” is illustrated in Mr Kernan’s negative thought. He too is called into account for his trial of being before the judgemental neuter. Kernan is literally depicted as a man that has fallen not only onto the floor of the pub, but also away from the righteous way of living an ethical and moral life, according to his friends. While he is portrayed as being one man of many, “no one knew who he was” (*D* 149). His being is called into question by the exterior as he faces a limit-experience, as he is put on trial by language: “Who is this man? What’s his name?” (*D* 150) When asked if he is all right by his friend, he replies, “Sha’s nothing” (*D* 150). When asked, “What’s the trouble”, he replies, “sha’s nothing” again. The unsaid discourse becomes an intangible limit that opens up a secondary plot of alterity in the negative space personified by the neuter. It is important to note that the limit to being before the *aporia* is the space of language, which constitutes “crossing of borders”.³²³ This “indivisible line” is essentially the limit to both nothing and everything that presents “something unavowable”.³²⁴ Indeed, the neuter notices that Kernan’s mouth is covered in blood, because a “piece of tongue seemed to be bitten off” (*D* 152). Symbolically, something unsaid is cut out of the whole, or broken from a block. The

³²¹ Blanchot, *The Work of Fire*, p. 323.

³²² Blanchot, *The Work of Fire*, p. 327.

³²³ Derrida, *Aporias*, p. 1.

³²⁴ Derrida, *Aporias*, p. 11.

neuter then winds back time to recall the subject's past as if he is present in absence. This begins as the reader is given background information into Mr Power's reputation in relation to other subject's in the community: "His inexplicable debts were a byword in his circle" (*D* 153). Moreover, he immediately argues that he is not responsible for Kernan's drunken state. But then the neuter doubles back and repeats the fact that he is being questioned about the loans to Kernan in times of need that pay for his alcohol abuse. Mrs Kernan notes: "I know you're a friend of his not like some of those others . . . as long as he has money in his pocket to keep him away from his wife and family" (*D* 154). Mr Power's response is "nothing", just as Mrs Kernan mimics his response to state that she too has "nothing". The mimicking of discourse points to a limit, whereby each man faces a problem where language cannot grasp the experience.

Correspondingly, the subject's lack of faith in the everyday life in relation to the community is questioned by way of belief in God. Indeed, Kernan and his friends discuss the belief of fidelity in prayer. Levinas argues that: "Fidelity is won by repentance and prayer . . . and the pardon which ensures it this fidelity comes to it from Outside".³²⁵ Kernan's friends believe that the subject has a drinking problem and that by taking him to church, he will be redeemed of his sins through the act of spiritual cleansing. At first the men argue whether that they are all "going to wash the pot . . . one and all. I say, one and all" (*D* 162) Indeed, the thought of being responsible for each other remains problematic as the men hide the real motive for the retreat. Kernan is relentless in his refusal to partake in the religious sojourn. However, he does join in the discussion about faith. He lets it be known that he has heard Father Burke speak at a sermon: "I forget the subject of his discourse now. Crofton and I were in the back of the . . . pit, you know . . . the -" (*D* 164). The gaps in his memory

³²⁵ Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, p. 231.

open up other possible interpretations that lead to the *aporia* of the past experience, which remains unknown in the unspeakable subtext. Kernan recalls the actual words missing from the text: “faith, I was genuinely moved, tell you the God’s truth – and I remember well his very words, Kernan, he said, we worship at different altars, he said, but our belief is the same” (*D* 165). This remark becomes inextricably linked to the dual belief for the subject that appears to be divided between Christian and negative theology, as a Hellenistic dialectics unfolds on the surface, while the subject is asked to respond. But then, the neuter interrupts the scene to take note that it “struck” him as “well put”. The neuter withdraws life from a distance as he repeats every word byway of secondary interpretation in the text-bracketing subjects. Indeed, signs of the Midrash of the Jewish interpretation follow the Talmudic thought, just as we get the “impression that someone is talking in the background”.³²⁶ But, McCoy interrupts the discussion with his theory that the actual fact is missing: “There’s not much difference between us . . . We both believe in – He hesitated for a moment – . . . in the Redeemer . . . our religion is the religion, the old original faith” (*D* 165). Kernan’s desire for separation from God coincides with Roughley’s observation of transcendent religion that he sees at work in Jewish ethics: “The renunciation of hope is an ethical movement toward the totally other, and the relation to separation from the totally other is the ethical relation which Being has with the totally other”.³²⁷ Indeed, Blanchot also argues that the “uncertain certainty of God’s existence makes us unable to prove either that God is or that he is not; nor can we doubt one or the other . . . must therefore affirm both . . . in the rigorous asperity that divides our thought”.³²⁸

It is no surprise that Kernan refuses to have light present at the religious sermon, when he himself appears to see light in darkness, after his being is called into

³²⁶ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 380.

³²⁷ Roughley, *Reading Derrida Reading Joyce*, p. 19.

³²⁸ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 103.

question. Indeed, the subject's confrontation with the fear of light begins with the theorising of Pope Leo XIII's idea of the "union of the Latin and Greek" as the words *Light upon Light* are spoken (*D* 166). Fogarty cancels out this thought, as he argues the correct motto is "Light in Darkness". But then Cunningham states that the correct motto is indeed: "Cross upon Cross – to show the difference between their two pontifications" (*D* 167). This thought follows in accord with Colleen Jaurretche's aesthetics of "Dionysius" logic, which suggests, "Negation eradicates any possibility of depicting God".³²⁹ Nevertheless, in between the subject's discussion, the neuter proceeds to note that the men drink "gravely" as the "whisky" flows, while the thought of "madness" is discussed in the theory that is cross-examined as a paradox with "thorny points". Kearney posits the "desire beyond desire" as an essentially "eschatological" thought in the sense that the he now faces an absent God as he faces the final question to being before Christ's image. Here alterity appears to be already summoned for the subject that is "not yet, that is already present yet always absent". In addition doubling manifests itself for being that is crossed out and stolen "like a thief in the night".³³⁰ The fine line between reason and seeing beyond reason is depicted in terms of the presence that lurks beyond the margins of the discourse in the blinding vision of "too great clarity".³³¹ Admittedly, after yet another round of drinks, MacHale stands up and says, "Credo" just as Fogarty yells, "I believe", while Kernan himself affirms that it is "God" (*D* 170). However, it is the voice of the neuter that takes note that Kernan had an "eye like a hawk" (*D* 170). Kernan's negative thought reveals a theory that posits an excess of reason that is akin to madness. This fact

³²⁹ Colleen Jaurretche, *The Sensual Philosophy: Joyce and the Aesthetics of Mysticism* (London: University of Wisconsin Press, 1997), p. 15.

³³⁰ Kearney, "Desire for God", in *God the Gift, and Postmodernism*, p. 114.

³³¹ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 197.

coincides with Derrida's perception of "blindness" in "human intelligence".³³² Indeed, Derrida refers to the *aporia* to illustrate that at the heart of every text crossed out, being faces being before death, at the limit to life. Kernan then shows signs of fear and revolt in the thought of having the "magic lantern business" present at the church. Nevertheless, once inside the church Kernan feels at home as he "recognised familiar faces" and the only light shining is awakening to the call that he hears in the sermon on light. Looking back, the words in the sermon call the subject's to wake up to the "light" in the "everlasting dwelling", which alludes to judgement in the end of time (*D* 173). The text is described as "difficult" to "interpret properly" by the neuter, due to the "impossible passage, the refusal, denied, or prohibited passage, indeed the nonpassage, which can in fact be something else, the event of a . . . future advent".³³³ Here the reader stands before a mystical limit-experience based on negative dialectics.

The extreme limit to being in relation to death is present in "The Dead", whereby Gabriel's being is called into question by the neuter that presents a doubling up of images. Indeed, the time of the event is erased in "the movement of erasure of the trace" present in repetition of naming.³³⁴ Correspondingly, time turns in the passing of dead images resurrected in the memory of the living. The image of Miss Kate and Miss Julia form a double, as do Mary and the caretaker's daughter Lilly. Gabriel and his wife form another double, and Mrs Conroy and Mr Conroy form a double of another double. The neuter addresses Gabriel and his wife in the first person as he shares a hidden connection to the lead protagonist, but the other characters call Gabriel, "Mr Conroy". Thus, he takes on a dual identity in the duplicity of "speech that is divided and doubled: what is said a first time on one side is said again a second time on the other": "Oh Mr Conroy, said Lily to Gabriel when she opened the door for

³³² Derrida, *Aporias*, p. 4.

³³³ Derrida, *Aporias*, p. 8.

³³⁴ Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, p. 108.

him” (*D* 176).³³⁵ The subject’s presence unfolds out of the “dark” as a “light” begins to shine on his inner being. He testifies as a silent witness to being in relation to the other images of the dead speaking. Ironically, in Hebrew his name means “Man of God” (*D* 306). While God’s presence is yet to be revealed, Gabriel ushers in the limit-experience present in his confrontation with being before death. God is death, because only in the “trial by death” can the subject recognise presence of being in relation to a limit.³³⁶ Indeed, Derrida states that “God means death”, because God is nothing and everything.³³⁷ Supporting this claim, Blanchot argues: “Thus in everything and everywhere we ‘have’ God, as much in his absence as in his presence, which is only the eminent form of his absence”.³³⁸ This dialogical thought is central to the exegesis that is circling the subject at the limit-experience, just as “infinite separation becomes union with the infinite” thought.³³⁹ This limit encounter unfolds in the limit-experience of the “absence of relation” to the “inaccessible, the unseizable desolation of the desert – becomes, in and through the speech that establishes itself at this level, the experience of the Outside”.³⁴⁰ When Gabriel is called into question from the outside, he refers to the letters that never reach their destination: “Here I am as right as the mail” (*D* 177). He then makes a silent gesture by way of the neuter that signals that he knows that Lily has not pronounced his name correctly in the repeated “three syllables”. This mistake highlights a disruption for being. The space of disjuncture is singled out as the place of alterity, where the other moves beneath the surface of sounds and in between the space of the name following like a shadow. Blanchot argues that when the word is spoken, it misses the actual thing in itself that remains

³³⁵ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 214.

³³⁶ Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, p. 114.

³³⁷ Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, p. 115.

³³⁸ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 118.

³³⁹ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 104.

³⁴⁰ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 184.

hidden beneath the letter. Thus it fails to form a unity with the inner spirit, because “he is always missing from his presence, just as he is missing from his place”.³⁴¹

It is precisely after the neuter recalls Gabriel’s perception of Gretta’s being that is reduced to a “symbol” in negative thought, which leads to a limit-experience for the artist. This encounter echoes Blanchot’s reading of the myth of Orpheus, which illustrates the limit to being. For Orpheus, “Eurydice is the limit of what art can attain; concealed behind a name and covered by a veil”.³⁴² According to the myth, Orpheus descends into the underworld to bring Eurydice back to life. However, he must not turn around to look at her during the ascent. If he does she dies a double death. Blanchot argues that “hell is nothing but the space of dispersion, it is nonetheless this space that makes Orpheus the one toward whom separation, dispersion itself, advances under the veil of the invisible and as the shadow of a person”.³⁴³ Gabriel is like Orpheus as he longs for unity in the desire to look back into the face of death as he watches his wife. Indeed, his memory turns around to face the dead as he tries to grasp the image: “There was grace and mystery in her attitude as if she were a symbol of something. He asked himself what a woman is standing on the stairs in the shadow, listening to distant music, a symbol” (*D* 211). Blanchot argues that when the subject names the woman, the thing itself disappears: “For me to be able to say, ‘This woman’ I must somehow take her flesh and blood reality away from her, cause her to be absent, annihilate her”.³⁴⁴ Thus, the artist’s first act of creation is destruction as the force of language symbolises death: “The word gives me being, but it gives it to me deprived of being. The word is the absence of that being, its

³⁴¹ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 71.

³⁴² Blanchot, *The Gaze of Orpheus and other literary essays*, trans. Lydia Davis (Barrytown: Station Hill Press, 1981), p. 99.

³⁴³ Blanchot, *The Gaze of Orpheus*, p. 99.

³⁴⁴ Blanchot, *The Work of Fire*, p. 322.

nothingness, what is left of it when it has lost being”.³⁴⁵ Looking back, the image of the female seducing the artist recalls Orpheus’ decent into hell, as he tries to reveal the concealed muse absent in the space of death. Indeed, the neuter declares that the subject names the muse “Distant Music”, just after he states that if “he was a painter he would paint her in that attitude” (*D* 211). The neuter notes that as “she turned towards” him a “sudden tide of joy went leaping out of his heart” (*D* 213). The neuter continues to narrate Gabriel’s increasing desire for unity played out in the narrative of silence as “Gabriel’s eyes were still”. He feels the need to “say something foolish and affectionate into her ear” (*D* 214). Gretta’s presence is killed by the blow of language, but resurrected in the presence of the name spoken. However, this presence is also silenced in the face of the alterity that speaks as a double as “moments of their secret life together burst like stars upon his memory” (*D* 214). The mounting sense of “joy” to escape to another world with Gretta is questioned in the repeated image of the “fire of stars” that “broke upon and illuminated his memory” (*D* 215). The neuter then recalls Gabriel’s desire to escape the “dull existence” of their everyday life, which in turn recalls Eveline’s affliction of indecision. The words fail to recapture unity in being that now stands before death: “Why is it that words like these seem to me so dull and cold? Is it because there is no word tender enough to be your name?” (*D* 215)

The “questioning into the lighting” follows Gabriel’s call as he names his muse, “Gretta”. She resembles the image of Eurydice, and the poetic act of destruction occurs just as he names her, but “then something in his voice would strike her. She would turn and look at him” (*D* 215). Blanchot argues: “Eurydice is the strangeness of extreme distance that is *autrui* at the moment of face-to-face

³⁴⁵ Blanchot, *The Work of Fire*, p. 322.

confrontation . . . that brings death”.³⁴⁶ The tragic blow of death is envisaged again in the metaphor of the negative turn of the memory, which turns back in time to destroy the image lost and recreated in the artist’s act of destruction. Indeed, Hill notes that recreation is not a return to the same place in time, but held in abeyance: “The work is sacrificed on the altar of its own dissolution. This entails however, no covert resurrection”.³⁴⁷ Gabriel’s ongoing sense of desire for unity with the muse is narrated by the neuter that describes the vision of “excess”, which corresponds to the journey back in time, “building upon its ruins”.³⁴⁸ The neuter states that “so many memories” were “kindling” as he felt they had “escaped from home and friends and run away together with wild and radiant hearts to a new adventure” (*D* 116). Gabriel’s desire to escape hell recalls the subject in “An Encounter” that yearns to break away from the restraints of the everyday. Gabriel faces the limit to being entrapped in the image of life in death as he yearns to escape his afflicted existence. He then tells the porter he doesn’t want any “candles” in the room, just like Kernan who needs no light to see the revelation that unfolds in the dark. Ironically, he is stigmatised by the death of being before the other face that calls him into question, as he confronts the limit to being at the cross road to the dissimulation of existence: “We don’t want any light. We have light enough from the street” (*D* 217). Once light is removed a “ghostly light from the street lamp” illuminates the window. Gabriel then calls out “Gretta” again as she turns away from the “mirror” to the “light”. Her being is then put into question as the cutting dialogue continues to transform the subject in time as the treachery of language circles around him in the space of discontinuity. It is here that Gabriel asks Gretta what she is “thinking about” after his presence moves past the “mirror” reflection while he mimics her desire. The subjects spin around as they exchange

³⁴⁶ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 60.

³⁴⁷ Hill, “Affirmation without Precedent”, in *After Blanchot: Literature, Criticism, Philosophy*, p. 65.

³⁴⁸ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 60.

positions, between the light and darkness as the one speaking resurrects the other that is dead upholds life, at the limit. The revolving movement of alterity can be compared to “*Lethe*” the companion of “*Eros*” and the shadow of *Altheia*: “the negative force from which knowledge that remembers would deliver us” awakens “proper to sleep”.³⁴⁹ The two subjects rotate around the circular thought of being before death.

A limit-experience unfolds after Gretta tells Gabriel about her encounter with the death of the other—Michael. This manifests itself after she recalls the voice that sang songs. The sounds of the music seduces her being just like the siren experience takes hold of Gabriel as he watches his wife’s image that calls him from the silent space of the dead. Roles reverse in the continuous movement of repetition that takes place between the neuter, and the subjects’ dialogue. Each subject exchanges positions in the deflected portraits of images and sounds that awaken memory to desire for unity in distance. Gretta tells Gabriel that “Michael Fury” is dead. Ironically his name Michael means, “Who is like God” in Hebrew and it shares a similar meaning with Gabriel’s name “Man of God” (*D* 86). In fact, in the “Book of Daniel” both Gabriel and Michael are described as being God’s archangels, sitting on each side of God’s throne, in the heavenly kingdom. Furthermore, it is in a secret vision that Daniel sees the image of Michael facing Gabriel. This revelation is described as bringing forth the end of “time, times, and half a time” when judgment will come: “At that time, your people will be rescued, all who are found inscribed in the book”.³⁵⁰ However, Daniel is told to keep the words secret. In view of this striking revelation it is possible to draw a comparison between the Gabriel in the “Book of Daniel” and the Gabriel in *Dubliners*. It may also shed light on Gabriel’s experience of guilt in betrayal for writing about people in the articles, which is exactly what the neuter does.

³⁴⁹ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 192-93.

³⁵⁰ Berlin and Brettler, *The Jewish Study Bible: Torah*, p. 1665.

In the narrative between the subject's thoughts an ongoing trial of interpretation takes place at the level of silence by the neuter. Moreover, Gabriel's symbolic reference is "fire" in the Torah and Michael's reference is "snow". The symbolic significance of the snow falling is juxtaposed with the thought of the subjects that come face to face with the alterity of being doubly wrapped in the text by the neuter. Alterity is present in the "name of neutral".³⁵¹ Indeed, the "Book of Daniel" also presents life divided in "two equal parts" just as "The Dead" can be doubled in the reading of two texts that share several similar themes. It is apparent that each subject that has been called into question in *Dubliners* confronts a sense of awakening in judgment, but only at the end of time. For this reason, each being faces its own trial that no other can experience.

In retrospect, Gabriel encounters negative thought that manifests itself after he feels the malaise of misinterpreting his own sense of obligation and duty towards the dead. Inevitably, he encounters "the inaccessible, the unknown itself" as he stands before language as other: "humiliated by the failure of his irony and by the evocation of this figure from the dead" (*D* 221). In the image of the other, Gabriel recognises his own vainglory that fills him with a sense of shame at the thought of knowing that he cannot comprehend the other human being. Admittedly, he fails to put his wife's sobriety before his own folly. This flash of light manifests itself into passion of negative thought as "vague terror seized Gabriel". This experience leads to affliction after he hears that Michael "died" for the love of Gretta (*D* 221). After she tells her version of her story, the neuter states that "she had that romance in her life: a man had died for her sake" (*D* 223). At the height of rupture and dispossession, the neuter echoes back the events told over again. As such, the neuter arrests the past memory of the missed experience that affirms an uncanny encounter. Here, the subject's mood

³⁵¹ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 77.

shifts in time as it “pained him now to think how poor a part he, her husband, had played in her life”, as he felt “strange pity for her” (*D* 223). The neuter describes the passing of time in the deflection of the other that is physically present in the difference of the grave image that has changed in the course of time at the limit. The encounter with the limit of time manifests itself further in the neuter’s observation. Here the subject fails to connect with the other, while Gretta “wonders at his riot of emotions” (*D* 224). The neuter then imagines Julia’s death too, as the space of silence sends an eerie “chill” in the room for the subjects. There appears to be a “double discontinuity, as though the empty space between the one and the other were not homogeneous but polarized...double distortion”.³⁵² The double distortion is present in the images of the dead thought accumulating. This event arrests time in the repetition, as time becomes “times” or doubled time folded over into a “half” which is described in the “Book of Daniel”. The experience of time being arrested in the past is recalled in the presence that manifests itself into an encounter with the alterity of being seen in relation to death. Indeed, Gabriel senses his being erased over in time again or more importantly “crossed out”, and stigmatised by the dead that is Michael-God. This theory brings us back to Kerney’s vision of the being doubly crossed out before God.

The neuter proceeds to question the time that has passed over all the subjects experience that are now compared to fading shadows on a wall. Indeed, all subjects are thrown into the abeyance of death: “One by one they were all becoming shades. Better pass boldly into that other world, in the full glory of some passion, than fade and wither dismally with age” (*D* 224). Indeed, it is here that “the text approaches the region where a supreme silence reigns, returning to the original condition from which it emerges”, as noted in Rabaté’s “critical reading of Blanchot” in reference to “two

³⁵² Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 71.

blanks”.³⁵³ Through the passion of Gretta’s lived experience, the underlying emotional recollection of the dead stains Gabriel’s memory too, as he mimics her desire to resurrect the thing in death. Here alterity unfolds in the doubling experience, by way of the neuter’s overshadowing the subject. The neuter analyses Michael’s desire to know the image that was “locked in her heart for so many years” (*D* 224). However, due to the space of distance he can only acknowledge the shadow of the outline of the doubled image, but never the real authentic thing present in the lived experience. Here, “tears” fill his eyes as he encounters the confrontation with “love” itself. Like a double seeing the self as an outsider to the lost experience with the other witness, so too, Gabriel sees an image of himself as “a young man, standing under a dripping tree” dying for love (*D* 114). By stepping outside the self into the space of the desert like the Jew, Gabriel encounters the face of the other and he recognises his own morality, dying doubly: “Whoever had reached the desert where there reigns the absence of relations exposes himself to this text . . . seize in him the moment when the absence of relation becomes pure relation”.³⁵⁴ This double death is when “language does not push hell back, but makes its way into it, speaking at the level of the abyss and thereby giving word to it; giving a hearing to what can have no hearing”.³⁵⁵ The neuter confesses that Gabriel’s “soul had approached that region where dwell the vast hosts of the dead” (*D* 224). Indeed, he has “seized” the “power of death” and made a reality in the “experience with the outside” as he recognises the image of his own existence of life reflected back in the void of the immediate. It is death that upholds life on the border between the two worlds at the limit.³⁵⁶ It is here, as Rabaté points out in the “dialectic silence” of the experience of alterity, which “produces the space

³⁵³ Rabaté, “Silence in Dubliners”, in *James Joyce: New Perspectives*, p. 69,

³⁵⁴ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 183.

³⁵⁵ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 184.

³⁵⁶ Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, p. 160.

of otherness”.³⁵⁷ The neuter states that: “His own identity was fading out into a grey impalpable world: the solid world itself which these dead had once time reared and lived in was dissolving and dwindling” (*D* 225). A light dims as his image fades into the portrait of the dying man presented with the image of the snow falling to the ground, which disappears into nothingness. So too, Gabriel’s image disperses itself into a fragment of a part of the “universe” into one text. The fading image of the light resembles the fading image of the memory that forgets in time that the shadow of negativity slides over the surface of the image of being into an eclipse of death-language. Indeed, it is written in the Torah that Michael only appears at the end of time, in the form of snow to the dreamer, described in the apocalyptic vision of death: “At that time, the great Prince Michael, who stands beside the sons of your people will appear . . . Many of those that sleep in the dust of the earth will awaken, some to eternal life, others to reproaches, to everlasting abhorrence . . . time of the end”.³⁵⁸

This chapter explored the problem of being in relation to language through the themes of death, dying and negativity in “The Sisters”, “An Encounter”, “Eveline”, “A Painful Case”, “Grace” and “The Dead”. The neuter acted as the silent ghost stalking each subject that was called into question. The critic intruded the reader’s space as he judged each character in the space of alterity. He provided a secondary running commentary on the border of each text. Inevitably, his presence resembled the Jewish form of the Midrash that interprets texts from a secondary perspective, while he redoubled each experience in the text. Indeed, he could also be interpreted as Gabriel the messenger of God whom interpreted Daniel’s dreams, if we wish to read each story as a dream of each subject that has now been given salvation, now that each name has been recorded in the book of the *Dubliners*. The theme of death in

³⁵⁷ Rabaté, “Silence in Dubliners”, in *James Joyce: New Perspectives*, p. 68.

³⁵⁸ Berlin and Brettler, *The Jewish Study Bible: Torah*, p. 1665.

absence set the scene in “The Sisters” as the unspoken discourse haunted the child, as he faced the ghost of the dead priest turning around in time in his memory. The theme of death and absence resonated in the language of the unsaid dialogue that doubled over by the neuter in “An Encounter”. Once again, the alterity of being and the problem of language revealed itself in Eveline’s confrontation with absence that led her toward the absent God. She suffered from the affliction of not being able to act out when called into question by the silent God. Duffy’s moral confrontation with the dead attested to an ethics beyond responsibility, as he refused to remember the name of the dead as he faced death in “A Painful Case”. In “Grace” Mr Kernan’s drinking problem was perceived as a moral problem connected to the unspoken community, as all others appeared to be responsible for the individual stuck in being before a lack of faith. Moreover, the final limit to being in death presented hope in the thought of resurrection in the “everlasting dwelling” as being returned to the grace of the book. Indeed, the lack of being in language showed that words used to bridge the gaps of difference led to silence, as language actually turned away from the lived experience when questioned at the limit. This was evident in the act of naming the symbol that missed the real experience that was carried into images of death. It was Gabriel’s confrontation with being in relation to death that led Gabriel to awaken to the limit-experience of dying the death of the other. Michael’s image ushered in a sense that all the other subjects called into question by the neuter were already dead. Thus, each subject had already faced their own trial of judgment in the text retold by the neuter. The theme of affliction will be explored in the next chapter, as the problem of language resurfaces for Stephen’s being in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*.

CHAPTER TWO

Affliction in Portrait of the Artist

“Affliction makes God appear to be absent for a time, more absent than a dead man, more absent than light in the utter darkness of a cell. A kind of horror submerges the whole soul. During this absence there is nothing to love . . . God’s absence becomes final. The soul has to go on living in the emptiness . . . Men struck down by affliction are at the foot of the Cross, almost at the greatest possible distance from God”.³⁵⁹

This chapter will examine Stephen’s experience of “affliction” that arises from being in relation to “language” in *A Portrait*. Affliction reveals the separated being that is torn from God’s presence, which is equivalent to Bruns reading of Blanchot’s writing on “negativity of experience to its limit”.³⁶⁰ Ostensibly, Stephen undergoes a perpetual trial of “negativity” in relation to language that resembles Blanchot’s reading of Weil’s afflicted “being who is without relation to God”.³⁶¹ The experience of affliction “is a kind of natural redemption. However, it is also the strange path toward damnation without sin, since those who are struck by affliction become fortuitously incapable of receiving God and are in danger of passing the limit”.³⁶² Correspondingly, Stephen’s being faces the affliction to being at the limit while he searches for unity in the word. The drama of being before the exterior space is questioned by the voices, sounds and images that seduce his being from the Outside. Here, the Outside is linked to the “neuter” that recalls the narrative of the work. Indeed the “artist, like the God of creation remains within or behind or beyond or above his handiwork, invisible, refined out of existence, indifferent, paring his

³⁵⁹ Simone Weil, *Waiting on God*, trans. Emma Craufurd (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul LTD, 1950), pp. 67-69.

³⁶⁰ Bruns, *Maurice Blanchot: The Refusal of Philosophy*, p. 137.

³⁶¹ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 112.

³⁶² Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 113.

fingernails”(P 233). Indeed, Dettmar notes that “some minor characters” are also interrogated by the “impersonal ‘voice’ of the faceless narrator”, albeit linked to the neuter.³⁶³ Subsequently, Stephen’s search for knowledge in being leads to his torment of retribution, as he comes to face the responsibility of being in relation to an absent God’s presence. However, once Stephen writes poetry he presents a written testimony to his call toward the everyday life, as he recreates life out of the poetic word itself.

In her essay, “Joyce: The (r)use of writing”, Cixous describes the process whereby, Joyce “discredits the subject” in the “delayed birth” of the subject.³⁶⁴ She identifies a “manifestation of the slide from One to the plural”.³⁶⁵ Here, Cixous argues that the “decentering of the subject” manifests itself in the “disquieting plural of the One”.³⁶⁶ Indeed, Cixous’ notion of the One is comparable to Blanchot’s perception of the “Outside” space that inhabits the narrative. Blanchot makes it clear that “language is to be always already Outside”.³⁶⁷ It is the limit to being, in the wake of a negative presence. Likewise, Cixous argues that the neuter is regarded as a presence that conceals the “subject (‘him’)”.³⁶⁸ This theory emphasises the fact that the subject who “does not speak” the name “I” it does not give birth to presence.³⁶⁹ Thus, until Stephen speaks out “I” he “remains a silent object”.³⁷⁰ However, Blanchot goes one step further in his observation of the “I” that is left behind in the text as a synthetic double. He names the actual “letter” in literature as “death’s space” that places the subject in parenthesis. From this perspective, the subject’s awakening to the experience of being in language is traced in the subject’s response to the question of

³⁶³ Dettmar, *The Illicit Joyce of Postmodernism*, p. 119.

³⁶⁴ Cixous, “Joyce: The (r)use of writing”, in *Post-Structuralist Joyce*, p. 16.

³⁶⁵ Cixous, “Joyce: The (r)use of writing”, in *Post-Structuralist Joyce*, p. 17.

³⁶⁶ Cixous, “Joyce: The (r)use of writing”, in *Post-Structuralist Joyce*, p. 17.

³⁶⁷ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 380.

³⁶⁸ Cixous, “Joyce: The (r)use of writing”, in *Post-Structuralist Joyce*, p. 23.

³⁶⁹ Cixous, “Joyce: The (r)use of writing”, in *Post-Structuralist Joyce*, p. 23.

³⁷⁰ Cixous, “Joyce: The (r)use of writing”, in *Post-Structuralist Joyce*, p. 23.

being. Once Stephen responds to the exegesis of being, by putting pen to paper, he becomes his own creator. As such, the act of writing affirms birth to presence from “absence” as Stephen faces “splitting” of being in poetic language.³⁷¹ While Cixous and Heath argue that there is no stable position for the subject that remains “an absence of any position” in the “perpetual movement of difference” and “displacement”³⁷², the language of the neuter will be used to frame negative thought.

The neuter is an unknown presence that brings the subject into play with the “sacred” relation that marks the intrusion of alterity in the narrative.³⁷³ This experience begins when the writer splits in two as he occupies the space of the subject and the written text. However, Blanchot argues the narrative voice bears the neutral in a symbolic space of language that circles the third person “he”³⁷⁴. Indeed, the neuter hides “in the background” of the circle in the “space infinitely outside.”³⁷⁵ Blanchot refrains from using the word God. Instead he refers to the “Outside” to signify the privileged space of a hidden God.³⁷⁶ Hill argues that Blanchot “is able to rewrite the name of God not as transcendence, but as the name for that which always escapes language, which is one way of describing the neuter”.³⁷⁷ Ostensibly, the neuter remains concealed in the narrative space. Seen in this light, Stephen is the “he” in relation to the neuter. He is alienated in the experience of estrangement that manifests itself in the search for unity. As a result, he hears a call from sounds that awaken his “being-in-the-self” to the exteriority of “being-for-the-self”, which is essentially

³⁷¹ Cixous, “Joyce: The (r)use of writing”, in *Post-Structuralist Joyce*, p. 25.

³⁷² Heath, “Ambiviolences”, in *Post-Structuralist Joyce*, p. 36.

³⁷³ Maurice Blanchot, *The Step Not Beyond*, trans. Lycette Nelson (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992), p. 73.

³⁷⁴ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 386.

³⁷⁵ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 380.

³⁷⁶ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 51.

³⁷⁷ Hill, *Blanchot: Extreme Contemporary*, p. 183.

another “I”.³⁷⁸ Blanchot compares the event of awakening to being afflicted by death to the myth of Orpheus. Here, the hero’s descends into hell to recapture the dead muse that leads to the rapture of a “presence of remembrance”.³⁷⁹ However, as soon as his gaze faces the dead image in the return, Eurydice dies twice, just like the being that is doubly dead in the corpse of words.³⁸⁰ Stephen’s descent into the hell of affliction is dictated by a neutral “spectral, ghostlike” presence that comes “beyond the grave”.³⁸¹

Consistently, Colin MacCabe argues that the narrative of the subject’s being-in-itself is “a contradictory work that articulates enough of the structure of classic realism to allow for its recuperation within the most traditional concerns”.³⁸² Indeed, Stephen’s portrait of realism unfolds into a “multiple relation” of a fragmented portrait, which keeps folding back. This is evident in the depiction of being in the dialogical frame of the neuter. MacCabe also argues that Stephen is “articulated differently” in each stage of the text. This is highlighted in the neuter’s displacements that present the subject before the exteriority of difference. MacCabe argues the disruptive development shows “these articulations are not unified in logic of progression”.³⁸³ Rather, they are articulated as Riquelme suggests by “juxtaposing” extreme “contraries”.³⁸⁴ Indeed, Stephen’s desire for unity in the wake of separation in being in language mounts into a series of moving limits, as affliction runs head on with negative thought. Thus, the limit operates as a response that fails to justify existence within the interminability present in the overturning of “limitless”

³⁷⁸ See Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, p. 104. The subject split between the “being-in-the-self” and “being-for-the-self” will follow in accord with Blanchot’s notion of being by language in itself.

³⁷⁹ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 381.

³⁸⁰ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 60.

³⁸¹ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 386.

³⁸² Colin MacCabe, *James Joyce and the Revolution of the Word* (London: Macmillan Press Ltd, 1981), p. 65.

³⁸³ MacCabe, *James Joyce and the Revolution of the Word*, p. 66.

³⁸⁴ John Paul Riquelme, “Stephen Hero and A Portrait of an Artist”, in *The Cambridge Companion to James Joyce* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 116.

fragmentation.³⁸⁵ This exegesis can be understood from Riquelme's reading of Joyce's displacement that shows events frame the past and present in the reflection of being overturned. The logic of the perpetual interruption of being in frames within frames ushers in the subject's experience of alterity. Hill alludes to the fact that it is the most repetitive structure of "displacements" that "constitutes the text's particular structure".³⁸⁶ Indeed repetition leads towards the nameless face of alterity—God.

The subject is called into question by the narrative of the neuter that presents a relation of "double discontinuity".³⁸⁷ This twofold experience of crossing and separation begins with the father's story that is doubled by the voice of the neuter, by way of commentary. Therefore, the subject's position emerges in the opening scene from a chiasmic movement that presents the effect of a double-crossing movement within a frame enclosed within another frame. The experience of crossing over into another scene unfolds firstly in the image of a "moocow". Once again, "moocow" is repeated in the "second" two lines after the first line of the first paragraph: "There was a moocow coming down along the road and this moocow that was coming down along the road met a nicens little boy named baby tuckoo" (*P* 3). The image of the moocow is doubled over as the subject enters the second scene of the second image following the infant named "baby tuckoo". The sound of the word "moo" is repeated over with difference in the word "tuckoo". Ironically, the two parts of the word tuckoo can be separated into two other meanings. The first connotes the image of a thing concealed in between two small places. The second meaning derives from the sound of the word "koo", which begs the reader to ask "who" is the polarised subject? Like a game, the child's image is hidden in-between spaces coined together, thus it occupies neither position and spoken for as other as it slides along in between spaces.

³⁸⁵ Hill, *Blanchot: Extreme Contemporary*, p. 93.

³⁸⁶ Hill, *Blanchot: Extreme Contemporary*, pp. 160-62.

³⁸⁷ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 71.

The neuter circles around a doubled presence that echoes with rhyming sounds in time. It is the sound of the words calling the subject into question. The subject then hears similar sounds repeated in difference. This is evident in the figure concealed between the words that double in couples of sounds. The first two lines of verse usher in the child's primary thoughts: "O, the wild rose blossoms / On the little green place" (*P* 3). The secondary ghostlike presence states: "He sang that song. That was his song" (*P* 3). The subject desires unity with the hidden sound as he is lured to question the rhymes of a song. The imagery doubles over into a rhyme crossing: "O, the green wothe botheth" (*P* 3). The words are blurred by the sound that is distorted to merge with the preconscious state of the subject. The next line spirals outwards to introduce two new sensations of images seen in the "hot" and "cold". These two sensations are contrasted with the subject's two primary relations in the world; the mother and the father. The parent's images are crossed over and compared with two sensations in the crisscrossing effect of separation: "His mother had a nicer smell than his father" (*P* 3). But the "queer" image of the oilsheet exceeds the negative comparison of difference, revealing an "excess" of contraries, which leaves something unaccountable. Later the mother's image of dancing spirals out into the singing sounds that play a vital role in the calling of the subject into the centre of the story. Each image unfolds in a crisscross effect in the wake of negativity in the movement of separation in language.

It is no surprise that in the drama of being divided, the name Dedalus derives from at least two sources. The first is from the Christian martyr St Stephen who was stoned to death outside Jerusalem in 34AD. The second name derives from Ovid's Greek myth of Deadalus, the mythical artificer that creates images in an immortal machine for the soul named "Labyrinth".³⁸⁸ His imprisonment leads to his

³⁸⁸ Ovid, *Metamorphosis*, trans. A. D. Melville (London: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 177.

construction of wings used to escape. But because he flies too close to the sun his wings of wax melt. Here too, Dedalus is the artificer that seeks to construct art to fly “through the sky”.³⁸⁹ Ironically, his name has the letter “a” missing, which denies full presence. However, the neuter watches in silence as the subject’s name is questioned: “What is your name? Stephen had answered: Stephen Dedalus” (*P* 5). The fact that the subject is answered for by another voice in the exteriority shows he is absent. He is then asked: “What kind of a name is that?” (*P* 5) Stephen remains silent in the space of death in a void as the neuter watches. He is asked: “What is your father?” Once again, Stephen is refused a voice of his own. We are told that “he” answered a “gentleman”. Nasty Roche inquires: “Is he a magistrate?” The exterior questions Stephen’s name while his inner self remains mute and unknown. Ironically, the word magistrate refers to the symbolic image of the father associated with two images of restraint. Firstly, the belt worn around his body, and secondly the belt used to punish.

The neuter always offers “two” sides of an interpretation to every image of Stephen’s being before he cuts through the scene as a doubled version of difference. As such, the subject is surrounded by a mysterious voice that reveals as it conceals the two relations. The sensation of pain now follows his mother’s image that faces his being, in accord with the negative image of pleasure: “His mother had told him not to speak with the rough boys in the college. Nice Mother!” (*P* 5) This scene reveals how the words in the text begin to take on a life of their own, as they exchange positions with the negative image in the context polarised. Images repeat themselves over again in a redoubling effect, as they exchange positions in a different context. This is characterised in the mother’s image that was “nice”, but then also “not so nice when she cried” (*P* 5). His mother puts up her “veil double to her nose to kiss him: and her

³⁸⁹ Ovid, *Metamorphosis*, p. 177.

nose and eyes were red” (*P* 5). The double veil is symbolic of the haunting effect of language that separates his presence from his mother, and also the narrator’s gaze.³⁹⁰ Accordingly, his father then gives him “two fiveshilling pieces for pocket money” (*P* 5). Every action manifests itself in a twofold relationship to another object that differentiates difference. His father’s name is linked to the law of information too. He tells the subject that whatever he does not to “peach on a fellow”. Ironically, he is then “peached upon” by the neuter, while his parents are also observed by the critic.

Stephen’s awakening to the exterior world is put to the test, as Wells calls his being into question in relation to his primary object of desire, his mother. The neuter states that Wells asks: “Dedalus, do you kiss your mother before you go to bed?” (*P* 10) At this point it appears the neuter is stalking minor characters shadowing the main protagonist, Stephen. Here, Stephen’s being speaks in the immediate present: “I do”. This “direct speech” indicates that Stephen’s being is affirming the time is present in the “now”. However, Stephen is ridiculed for confirming the fact that he does indeed kiss his mother “every night before he goes to bed” (*P* 11). He then backtracks as he gives the opposite answer to the question, which creates a sense of confusion: “I do not”. This moment marks a crisis for Stephen as he fails to get to the real truth of the question after giving an answer to both sides. This event remains an ongoing problem for Stephen throughout his search for truth and justice in language. The neuter asks: “What was the right answer to the question? He had given two and still Wells laughed” (*P* 11). The image of Wells lingers on in Stephen’s memory, associated with negativity. The painful experience of love turns to images of hate as the neuter predicts Stephen’s fall into filthy, dirty water. The fall is contrasted with the image of “a fellow that had once seen a big rat jump plop into the scum” (*P* 11). Looking back,

³⁹⁰ Blanchot, “Le Premier roman de Joyce”, p. 610. Blanchot argues that the feminine space is hidden: “women are constantly present in the text *A Portrait*, but never show themselves directly”.

the act of kissing his mother is also linked to the negative experience of being thrown into the dark, wet, “cold slime of the ditch” that “covered his whole body” (*P* 11).

The neuter remains a constant companion for Stephen as he records his actions. Here he watches him watching Fleming open “the geography to study the lesson” (*P* 12). The doubling effect haunts the experience for Stephen’s being that faces disunity and dissimulation at every turn. Not only are events doubled, but also they are repeated again in time by the neuter: “They were all in different countries and the countries were in continents and the continents were in the world and the world was in the universe” (*P* 12). The neuter reads Stephen’s script regarding his position in the cosmos that spirals from the present to the exterior. Here his thought spirals outwards, just like the neuter’s thought spiral out and stops to question his being: “Stephen Dedalus Class of Elements Clongowes Wood College Sallins County Kildare Ireland Europe The World The Universe” (*P* 12). Not only is this portrait inscribed in the text, but a second script is placed on the opposite page that calls Stephen’s being into question as he faces the outside: “Stephen Dedalus is my name, Ireland is my nation. Clongowes is my dwellingplace And Heaven my expectation” (*P* 13). There are two scenes that describe Stephen’s position in the cosmos. However, the neuter interrupts and questions the negative in the absent space exterior: “What was after the universe? Nothing. But was there anything after the universe?” (*P* 13) Surrounding Stephen’s being the neuter questions the space that exceeds knowledge in the doubling effect.

Looking back, the neuter acts like an inquisitive child that puts the space of language into questions that stands in relation to Stephen’s being that is now opening to the exteriority. The self-reflective dialogue between the neuter and the text probe the space that surrounds Stephen’s being: “Was there anything around the universe to show where it stopped before the nothing place began? It could not be a wall but there

could be a thin thin line there all round everything” (P 13). The neuter touches upon the limit to knowledge as it draws the invisible line between the subject and the Outside; just like Freud’s “unconscious” that surrounds being in relation to the exterior.³⁹¹ Thus, Stephen’s memory is premeditated before his actions just as the neuter relays events before they occur. In fact, the neuter encompasses the subject’s universe. It states that: “It was very big to think about everything and everywhere. Only God could do that” (P 13). The neuter compares each event to the exterior of all in relation to one to justify answers in the subject’s search for an origin. The question of knowing the whole is linked back to God’s name that summons Stephen to respond: “God was God’s name just as his name was Stephen. *Dieu* was the French for God” (P 13). The materiality of the name is compared to the space of difference in other languages that embodies the same word within different contexts. It is evident that the word of the name of God is the very “limit” to creation: “God created the world”.³⁹²

The thought of God takes on multiple images for the neuter that displaces the name in different contexts. The neuter destabilises the belief that there is only one God, as it focuses on the materiality of the word to show that one word can take on plural meanings. We are told: “when anyone prayed to God and said *Dieu* then God knew at once that it was a French person praying” (P 13). Not only does the word God take on a different meaning, but it also takes on different words to mean the same thing. The sliding image of the name God shifts in different contexts as meaning is destabilised. This omnipotent presence that marks its entrance into Stephen’s being via the neuter appears to be linked to God’s name and the universe: “Though there were different names for God in all the different languages in the world and God understood what all the people who prayed said in their different languages still God

³⁹¹ See Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, pp. 230-37.

³⁹² Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 117

remained always the same God and God's real name was God" (P 13). The neuter questions the Christian conception of God's name that differs from the Jewish conception of God, which leads to the "sanctification of His name".³⁹³ It is common practice in Jewish writing for the letter "o" to be missing in the word God that signifies the ethic of "negatively a separation from all".³⁹⁴ Indeed, Stephen's name has the letter "a" missing in Dedalus, just as the Jewish God is referred to as G-d. The name remains a question. Blanchot argues: "God's name is therefore his real name only if we renounce everything in thinking it . . . God truly gave his name to us".³⁹⁵

Stephen's being is called into question again while the subject is served his first pre-adult Christmas dinner. Indeed, the subject's being comes face to face with his father's negative attitude towards the Catholic Church. This event has dire consequences on his belief in Christian faith. While eating the turkey, Stephen's being is caught in the cross fire of a dispute about God and the church. The negative thought manifests itself in the separation between church and faith: "Is it for Billy with the lip or for the tub of guts up in Armagh? Respect!" (P 32) Dante states that Stephen will remember the "language he heard against God and religion and priests in his own home". Mr. Dedalus cries out in support of Parnell and angst towards the Church: "Sons of bitches! . . . When he was down they turned on him to betray him and rend him like rats in a sewer. Lowlived dogs!" (P 33) Dante fiercely defends the movement that crucified Parnell's being: "they obeyed their bishops and their priests" (P 33). Stephen hears the word "Protestant" amidst the conversation, which links the church back to the forbidden image of his childhood sweetheart Eileen. He is condemned for being associated with her, because she is regarded as the impure other, Protestant. Mr Dedalus argues that the society he inhabits is a "priest-ridden race and always were

³⁹³ Epstein, *Judaism*, p. 158.

³⁹⁴ Epstein, *Judaism*, p. 23.

³⁹⁵ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 117.

and always will be” (*P* 33). Ironically, Dante states they must honour priests who are linked to the symbol of sin of Eden, in Christ’s eye: “apple of My eye” (*P* 33). This event has a negative effect on the subject’s belief in God and the Christian Church.

It is evident that Stephen’s experience of negative thought leads to his own religious revolt against the unified image of God. Essentially, the subject’s memory of Parnell’s trial develops into a critical problem related to the betrayal of being seen in adultery. We are told his own people later betrayed the hero: “The priests were right to abandon him. The priests were always the true friends of Ireland” (*P* 33). Dante argues that politics and religion are not separated but united by the Catholic institution: “God and religion before everything! Dante cried. God and religion before the world!”(*P* 33) A negative revolt against God manifests itself in Mr Casey’s protest: “No God for Ireland! He cried. We have had too much God in Ireland. Away with God!” (*P* 33) Dante retaliates: “Blasphemer! Devil!” (*P* 33) Dante’s image of God is unified with the image of the Church. On the other hand, Mr Casey’s negative triad revolts against unification in being as he tries to separate the spiritual connection from the political image of God presented by the Catholic Church. Dante repeats her fierce attack against Parnell as she defends her faith in God: “Devil out of hell! We won! We crushed him to death! Fiend!” (*P* 33) Mr Casey sobs in front of the child that is “terror-stricken” after seeing tears fill his father’s eyes. As such, Stephen comes to mimic his father’s disbelief as he struggles to overcome being before an absent God.

Following Stephen’s private flogging at home, he encounters a round of public flogging at school after he smashes his glasses. This event is symbolic of his faith that is breaking up. His teacher excuses him from his written work, but Dolan doubts that Stephen is being honest as he calls him into account for his actions: “You, boy who are you?” Dolan hears Stephen’s words but he asks him to repeat his name again:

“Broke? What is this I hear? What is your name is . . . Out here, Dedalus. Lazy little schemer. I see schemer in your face” (*P* 51). This situation is in the present while Stephen is portrayed in the inverted commas. This fact shows that time is captured in the present experience of the immediate “now”. However, once the description of the emotional impact of the flogging begins the internal torment of the inner-experience shifts to the voice of the neuter. Here time changes direction as time turns around to recall the past experience: “A hot burning stinging tingling blow like the loud crack of a broken stick made his trembling hand crumple together like a leaf in the fire” (*P* 51). The thought of a “prayer” springs to mind amidst the inner trial for Stephen now faces the torment of suffering in the repeated blow of the injustice. Indeed, he faces the tyranny of injustice that exceeds the limit as he faces humiliation. His broken glasses are symbolic of his vision that is now broken, which coincide with his being in revolt.

In effect Stephen is physically punished for a crime that he did not commit. However, it is the neuter that questions the trial and error of injustice: “the prefect of studies was a priest but that was cruel and unfair” (*P* 51). The neuter proceeds to criticise the unjust treatment that is described as “a stinking mean thing to do” (*P* 53). The memory haunts the subject’s presence that relives the cruel event over. He feels the “same humiliation” repeated over and over again in time: “He suffered time after time in memory the same humiliation until he began to wonder whether it might not really be that there was something in his face” (*P* 54). Here we can take note that the affliction is linked to an ethic of justice seen in a desire for unity in being “purity of desire” which is attracted to the “good”.³⁹⁶ It is evident that this experience manifests into doubt for Stephen as he questions the reality of the event relived over in his memory that keeps turning to look back. Each memory is a doubled event in time that

³⁹⁶ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 109.

haunts the subject. Indeed, the words keep circling around his being repeating the “unjust cruel” event, just as the neuter continues to examine the trial unfolding as Stephen makes his way to the Rector. The act of confessing the truth has a liberating effect on Stephen’s being seen in the euphoria. The sin that is forgiven in the instant of a response multiplies in effect after he is questioned in the next experience to come.

Stephen is called into question in class and put on trial again, but this time for showing signs of atheism in his essay. Clearly, his negative thought exceeds the limits of reason as he sees beyond the limit: “This fellow has heresy in his essay” (*P* 86). Stephen is questioned by Mr Tate, who perceives the desire to go beyond Christian unity: “It’s about the Creator and the soul . . . without a possibility of ever approaching nearer. That’s heresy” (*P* 86). The fact that Stephen recognises there is no unity between the self and the creator named God indicates a sign that he is reading dialogically to infinity. The incident is overlooked as a mistake in interpretation: “I meant without a possibility of ever reaching . . . Ah! Ever reaching. That’s another story. But the class was not so soon appeased” (*P* 84). Ironically, after his being is called into question, Stephen experiences “malignant joy” and he confesses that his primary influences in literature are other writers that are also regarded as heretics and atheists. Boland considers Byron an immoral “heretic”. This image leads to the Jewish question that enters Stephen’s negative thought. He is confronted with a lack of an origin seen in the image of the Jewish harlot: “Tyson was riding into Jerusalem”. Later he claims he did not know that Byron was a heretic, but his peers demand that he confess to a lack of faith: “Admit. No. Admit. No” (*P* 83).

In effect, Stephen is interpreting his relationship with his creator, in light of Jewish thought, in terms of “separation” and “exodus” that leads to infinity. This is the reason why he refuses to “admit” he is a heretic. Indeed, Weil’s depiction of her

relationship with an “unknown God” resembles Stephen’s Jewish exigency as he confronts the problem of genesis. Here, the subject confronts creation in terms of separation and abandonment, just as Weil perceives that God remains an open question mark which in turn leads from question to question, “as thought for her the answer came first”.³⁹⁷ Thus, the question becomes a response in “a way of testing” the “affirmation of being that answers the call of the question in the name”.³⁹⁸ Weil states that: “God placed the skies between him and us in order to hide himself; he gave to us only one thing, his name”.³⁹⁹ Through the reverence of God’s name, the absence forms a presence. Thus, the absent thing in the “name” is a notion that Blanchot associates with the trait of atheism. He argues that the “atheist is closer to God than the believer” because the “emptiness” that the subject renounces becomes in fact a presence, which is purer than the believer of God.⁴⁰⁰ The subject can know nothing apart from the “contemplation or combinations of letters” that emerge in the ecstasy of a “divine mystery”.⁴⁰¹ Thus, while Stephen faces the separation in being another, for him to be totally present he must realise that his maker must be infinitely absent.

The thought of an absent God unfolds into signs of affliction, whereby Stephen’s memory reflects back in time. The voices that call his being into question become an absent presence for his inner self. He becomes disconnected from the real, as his being looks back. The sounds of voices that link Stephen’s being to the image of beauty seduce him through a movement of sounds. He begins to see himself “beyond their call” as the torment of voices urges him to “be a good catholic above all things” (*P* 88). This call appears to conflict with his desire for the real. He faces a void as the “hollowsounding” words ring loud “in his ears” revealing guilt (*P* 88). His

³⁹⁷ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 108.

³⁹⁸ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 108.

³⁹⁹ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 110.

⁴⁰⁰ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 111.

⁴⁰¹ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 110.

being is consumed with an inner passion that is beyond silence. Here the subject faces fragmented images of “crushed herbs in his heart” juxtaposed with “vapours of maddening incense before the eyes of his mind” (*P* 91). The “anguished eyes” and “maddening fumes” support the negative thought that appears to be creating a mystical “blinding” experience. Indeed, the subject’s separation from the belief in prayer is calling him into question as he faces impossibility at a limit: “His prayer addressed neither to God nor saint” (*P* 92). He faces the religious ecstasy of affliction as he battles with “letters” which separate his being put on trial. He then questions the rapture of the limits to the imaginary fantasy that depicts seductive “filthy orgies”. His inner existence struggles to find unity in the spaces of difference that call him outside.

Stephen faces the self as an image doubled by the impurity of language that entraps his being. His presence is ripped apart as he sees his “monstrous way of life” existing “beyond the limits of reality” (*P* 98). Guilt and affliction surround his presence as he separates words from things that lie beneath the surface. Weil claims that affliction is different to suffering as it “takes possession of the soul and marks it through and through with its own particular mark, the mark of slavery”.⁴⁰² Affliction is akin to a religious encounter that manifests itself from infinite separation from God’s name. Stephen confesses that he begins to separate his emotional impulses from the concrete real as “nothing moved him or spoke to him from the real world unless he heard in it an echo of the infuriated cries within him” (*P* 98). His limit-experience is a spiritual crisis that manifests itself from the inability to respond to the call: “no earthly or human appeal, dumb and insensible to the call . . . by his father’s voice” (*P* 98). Stephen encounters the slavery of the fragmented self as he faces his presence as a shadow. Here, he walks as a double before the self: “He could scarcely

⁴⁰² Weil, *Waiting for God*, p. 64.

recognise as his own thoughts, and repeated slowly to himself: —I am Stephen Dedalus. I am walking beside my father whose name is Simon Dedalus” (P 98). His enunciation leads him to face the self as a double as his “childhood grew dim” (P 105). The more his being faces negativity, the further he encounters separation in being.

Fundamentally, Stephen’s relationship with the image matures as his mind develops in accord with the dialogue of the neuter’s questioning him. He appears to be a step closer to the neuter’s space of being in control of language, as he reads *The Count of Monte Cristo*. His increasing level of fascination with words draws his being back to the exterior life that he faces. It is clear that he starts to mimic the image of the other that is reflected back in the words: “Words which he did not understand he said over and over to himself till he had learned them by heart: and through them he had glimpsed of the real world about him” (P 64). The effect of the lived experience is resurrected in the return of the words that put him in an uncanny double bind. The mimicking is evident in Stephen’s desire for unity with the images reflected back in the book. His image is compared to the other Dante in the narrative as he becomes fascinated with Mercedes’ image. His fascination with a desire for unity culminates into his experience of brooding over her image that seduces him. He rejects the myth as he imagines the real authentic experience that he ironically encounters in the text, “to meet in the real world the unsubstantial image which his soul so constantly beheld. He did not know where to seek it or how: but a premonition which led him on told him that this image would, without any overt act of his, encounter him” (P 67). He identifies with the image of Dante as he faces the trial of being separated from desire.

The experience of separation from the image torments Stephen’s lack in being, just as he desires unity with the image that is merely a name and not the real thing in itself. The neuter states: “they would meet quietly as if they had known each other and

had made their tryst, perhaps as one of the gates or in some more secret place” (*P* 67). The neuter proceeds to narrate an encounter between Stephen and another subject that manifests itself in the space of silence, while no words describe the actual event: “They would be alone, surrounded by darkness and silence: and in that moment of supreme tenderness he would be transfigured” (*P* 67). It is important to note that Stephen has not experienced the lived event described by the neuter beforehand. However, Stephen’s sexual desire manifests itself as an inner awakening in imagery of darkness described by the neuter. As such, there is no physical contact, apart from the meeting of the eyes: “He would face into something impalpable under her eyes and then in a moment, he would be transfigured. Weakness and timidity and inexperience would fall from him in that magic moment” (*P* 67). The moment of transformation manifests itself before the neuter that presents the self-consciousness of innocence in the being still in darkness without knowing sin. Until he acts out the desire to experience the real flesh, the subject remains in the world of pure imaginary.

While Stephen has not physically committed a crime, he is punished for feeling physical desire in the mind and body by the neuter. His desire for unity with the other image leads to the calling of his being into question again, as Mercede’s image haunts his memory. He is described as a deceitful criminal: “He cared little that he was in moral sin and that his life had grown to be a tissue of subterfuge and falsehood” (*P* 105). The fact that Stephen’s mind imagines sexual contact is a sin that torments his self-consciousness, because he cannot reconcile his inner desire with the exterior flesh. Here, guilt is described as monstrous and wicked in the subject’s desire that festers: “Beside the savage desire within him to realise the enormities which he brooded on nothing was sacred. He bore cynically with the shameful details of his secret riots in which he exulted to defile with patience whatever image had attracted

his eyes” (*P* 106). Through the eyes of the other, Stephen is lured into sin. The first primary contact he has with his mother is also fixed on the eyes, the red eyes. His mother’s eyes are an image transferred to the object of desire of the eyes of other women that he fancies here. He dreams of a figure that crossed “by day . . . demure and innocent”, by night “lecherous cunning” with real “eyes” of “brutish joy” (*P* 106). The image lures him into the act of sin through the gaze of the eyes reflected back.

The physical torment of sexual desire builds up into monstrous imagery for Stephen’s being, as he battles onwards to the city streets, in search of the real lived experience. The neuter describes the scene of uncontrollable “need” whereby Stephen acts like a desperate criminal. He is called by the silent sirens that seek union with his body: “His blood was in revolt. He wandered up and down the dark slimy street peering into the gloom of lanes and doorways, listening eagerly for any sound” (*P* 106). The sound calls Stephen’s being into question as the neuter responds: “He wanted to sin with another of his kind, to force another being to sin with him and to exult with her in sin. He felt some dark presence moving irresistibly upon him from the darkness, a presence subtle and murmerous as a flood filling him wholly with itself” (*P* 106). The imagery of the rustling sound brings forth the “cry that he had strangled for so long”. This silent cry breaks out like a “wail of despair from hell” as suffering mounts into agony for the subject that faces the affliction of “burning as if before an altar”. Indeed, he is questioned before the response as his split self is ripped apart. He is given the choice to decide before the crime that develops in the flesh. The moment the subject makes the decision at his trial his emotion is overpowered by the climax that leads to the affliction of “hysterical weeping” and “tears of joy” (*P* 106).

Stephen’s experience with physical desire is played out for a second time as music circles around his being that is plunged into the silent pages of history that lay

before him, just like Odysseus. Here, Stephen's "unfaithful" being is lured into sin by the enchantment of a "marvellous beyond" by "sirens" calling.⁴⁰³ The neuter asks: "What music? The music came nearer and he recalled the words, the words of Shelley's fragment upon the moon wandering companionless, pale for weariness" (*P* 110). Stephen's being is compared to the singular fragment in the infinite universe, as the neuter recalls, "the stars began to crumble and a cloud of fine stardust fell through space" (*P* 110). The "dull light" falls on the "page" as another question is brought to light while something mysterious looms. Real life manifests itself in the experience of desire played out in "his own soul growing forth to experience, unfolding itself sin by sin, spreading abroad the balefire of its burning starts and folding back upon itself" (*P* 110). The image of the lived experience in the flesh causes affliction, but still remains unspeakable. However, once he crosses over the threshold he escapes to freedom: "violent sin he had felt a wave of vitality pass out of him" (*P* 110). The inner experience of freedom equates to the fact that no "part of his body or soul is maimed". Thus, he is in charge of his destiny and there is no God to punish his being hereafter.

However, the trial of God's call precedes the being before sin as he is compared to the first man named Adam in Genesis. Thus, in the wake of the lived sexual experience, the neuter states that Stephen cannot justify the thought of forgiveness. His sin leads to the negative thought that questions faith: "what did it avail to pray when he knew that his soul lusted after its own destruction?" (*P* 111) He refuses responsibility as his being recognises the negative thought of shame before his creator. He refuses to confess to the "Allseeing and Allknowing" God (*P* 111). The neuter states that his "pride" is too great: "he knew that it was in God's power to take away his life while he slept and hurl his soul hellward ere he could beg for mercy" (*P*

⁴⁰³ Blanchot, *The Gaze of Orpheus*, p. 107.

111). The image of hell evokes terror in fear of redemption negated by the thought of the lived experience. Stephen is named a sinner by the neuter that is out of “the sight of God” and “nearer” to the evil “refuge of sinners” (*P* 112). Moreover, the subject is at the limit of a crossing as he faces responsibility for his action reflected back in time. However, the question of language turns to his “arid pleasure” that follows “up to the end the rigid lines of the doctrines of the church”. He proceeds to face affliction in the “obscure silences” that rings loud in “his own condemnation” (*P* 113). It appears that “God is not able to do anything for us” in the tension of frightening distance.⁴⁰⁴ Here, something unjustifiable continues to wrench the subject’s being that is pulled apart.

The injustice of being in a relation to negative thought is brought to light before the ethic of Saint James. He claims: “he who offends against one commandment becomes guilty of all” (*P* 113). Indeed, Stephen questions the problem of being responsible for other vices in comparison to the one single act committed, “from the seeds of lust all other deadly sins had sprung forth” (*P* 113). Further questions emerge from his negative thought as the subject questions the ethical behaviour which is weighed from side to side: “If a man had stolen a pound in his youth and had used that pound to amass a huge fortune how much was he obliged to give back” (*P* 114). The unequal status of Stephen’s limit-experience of evil is compared to other sins as the value of his crime is measured. Indeed, his spiritual progress that yearns for the “good” is mirrored by the neuter’s awakening to ethical values, which can be comparable to God. Blanchot notes: “That first we had the idea of a Good, then the name of . . . God”.⁴⁰⁵ Indeed, Stephen is torn as he searches for the good, but he refuses unity in being responsible for all. He asks: “Does a tiny particle of the consecrated bread contain all the body and blood of Jesus Christ, or a

⁴⁰⁴ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 115.

⁴⁰⁵ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 110.

part only of the body and blood?" (*P* 114) As a result, the thought of injustice leads to the image of Jesus' suffering for humanity, while the subject doubts God's son is real.

Ironically, Stephen's refusal to accept responsibility for all of humanity develops in the wake of his suffering from extreme affliction at the retreat. Indeed, this scholastic experience mirrors his sacred inner experience that follows lived sexual experience. The neuter weighs Stephen's being-in-itself like a "thick fog" as he feels the malaise of his being, turning around in the crossing over in the self-reflection. The retreat focuses on the inward manifestation of self-consciousness in the face of death, judgment, heaven and hell. The neuter repeats the fact that God has come to Stephen as light from darkness as he recognises the experience of difference: "God's turn had come. Like a beast in its lair his soul had lain down in its own filth but the blasts of the angel's trumpet had driven him forth from the darkness of sin into the light" (*P* 123). Stephen has nowhere to hide, since his being is called into question by the priest that puts him on trial. The fact that he is on trial again forces him to feel the immense guilt of a criminal: "The words of doom cried by the angel shattered in an instant his presumptuous peace" (*P* 124). The neuter recalls Stephen's trial of facing the limit to being as he recalls the eyes that blew his mind away. This event may be a figment of his imagination, but the seductive eyes lure him towards sin: "The wind of the last day blew through his mind; his sins, the jeweled harlots of his imagination" (*P* 124).

Looking back, Stephen tries to justify his relationship with the unnamed prostitute and the virgin named Emma. The image of Emma is contrasted and compared with different images that spring forth to awaken his sense of responsibility for the other person he faces: "Was that boyish love? Was that chivalry? Was that poetry?" (*P* 124) Shame stalks his presence as he sees himself as a "brutelike" beast that is not able to control his passion. He questions his motive in the face of his lack

of judgement as the cloak of redemption follows his tail. The experience of living the event as an image floods his mind as “sordid details of his orgies stank under his very nostrils: the sootcoated packet of pictures which he had hidden in the flue of the fireplace and in the presence of whose shameless or bashful wantonness he lay for hours sinning in thought and deed: his monstrous dreams” (*P* 124). Stephen’s presence is surrounded by the past memories, which evoke disgust in the thought of redemption. He recounts his actions before the images of all: “God and the Blessed Virgin were too far from him” as “God was too great and stern and the Blessed Virgin too pure and holy” (*P* 124). He is at a cross road and he cannot identify with either image, because he cannot justify the fact that both images stand separate to his being.

The image of Emma is then compared to the image of God and the Blessed Virgin by the neuter that notes the subject’s suffering, “humbly and in tears, bent and kissed the elbow of her sleeve” (*P* 125). It is in the feeling of love that Stephen finds justice in his experience of truth. Strikingly, Blanchot notes that in affliction there is “nothing of the Good and nothing of God save the name”.⁴⁰⁶ While, Stephen appears to find solace in the untouchable image of Emma that is merely a name, God’s name is also a distant portrait, which is a remote image estranged from the real experience. Thus, his suffering is now taking on further signs of affliction, which Weil describes as an “irreducible” form of suffering from being held “apart”.⁴⁰⁷ Affliction is an “uprooting” of life, “a more or less attenuated equivalent to death”.⁴⁰⁸ There is a “social factor” that is essential in the affliction encountered in the “being who is without relation to God”.⁴⁰⁹ Stephen imagines his being and Emma’s uprooting similar to Adam and Eve’s expulsion from Eden. Here, the neuter adds that “beauty”

⁴⁰⁶ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 109.

⁴⁰⁷ Weil, *Waiting on God*, p. 63.

⁴⁰⁸ Weil, *Waiting on God*, p. 64.

⁴⁰⁹ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 112.

is not like earthly beauty, but like the “morning star which is its emblem”. Real beauty is the limit of separation seen in the distant star that marks Jewish Zionism: “Men of affliction are at the foot of the Cross, almost the greatest possible distance from God” (WG 69). The subject is abdicated in a tension of being “empty of God”.⁴¹⁰

Stephen’s self-consciousness reflects and doubles back to the image of his being lost in the Garden of Eden with Emma. Innocence is compared to the priest’s version of hell, and the voice of God calling Adam in the garden mirrors Stephen’s suffering. Here, negative thought is pushed to the limit of being before an absent God, as Stephen relives the event of hell again described in the priest’s sermon on evil. This begins after Adam and Eve are called into question by God. Stephen faces the possibility of responding to the decision to act or not to act: “God was heard in that garden, calling His creature man to account” (P 127). Adam and Eve are not given a chance to respond as they are forced out of Eden, just like Stephen who is expelled by the exterior. Thus Stephen is bought back to the altar, back to the scene, to suffer the torment of redemption. He must respond to the call for his actions before he can overcome the affliction of redemption: “Hell has enlarged its soul and opened its mouth without any limits—words taken, my dear little brothers in Christ Jesus, from the book of Isaiah” (P 126). The mockery of boundless space mirrors the cruel image of the priest’s “chainless watch” that signals the thought of absence. The removal of limits is associated with the limits imposed on the Catholic subject now questioned.

The priest’s description of hell is a metaphor for the thought of “the infinite” which is an aspect of the limitlessness to being an eternal reoccurrence. This experience manifests itself after the subject faces the “moving limit” in the endless

⁴¹⁰ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 112.

thought that “escapes unity”.⁴¹¹ Stephen’s being refuses to accept responsibility in the negative thought, hence he is stuck in “being in the becoming without end”.⁴¹² The thought of hell opens up in boundless torment that follows the sinner before absence. The priest begs disciples to imagine hell as something like a horrid “sickening stench multiplied a millionfold and a millionfold again from the millions of fetid carcasses” (*P* 130). The image of the “fire” is then described as being the “greatest torment” that causes punishment for the sinner that is to “burn forever” in the “boundless, shoreless and bottomless” place that has no end. The soul is then “tortured” forever in hell as endless “questions” follow the sinner after death. Time is also infinite and limitless for being has no beginning and no end in the subject’s relation to hell: “time is, time was, but time shall be no more . . . God spoke to you by so many voices but you would not hear . . . not obey” (*P* 133). The priest’s images evoke fear, terror and guilt into the being that is excessively tormented into believing that hell is an endless pit of evil waiting for the sinner that refuses to confess for his being in time before a God.

Stephen faces the affliction of being an evil sinner because he faces redoubling in negative thought of hell seen in the images that stand before his refusal to accept unity in Christ’s image. He feels maimed and crushed as he is called into question: “God had called him. Yes? What? Yes. His flesh shrank together as it felt the approach of the ravenous tongues of flames” (*P* 134). However, it is the neuter that presents Stephen’s suffering from an extreme sense of malediction. This is evident in the neuter’s depiction of the image of his being nailed to a cross just like Jesus Christ, the son of God. Indeed, he feels that he “had died. Yes. He was judged” (*P* 134). The image of hell opens up to the negative, as unknown “voices spoke to him” just as he faces absolute loss of the self, in the thought of dying an endless death. Here his being

⁴¹¹ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 209.

⁴¹² Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 209.

is lost to infinity in time without end. Ironically, the neuter states that he will finally respond to God's call after he has been punished. We are told that he will "repent in his heart and be forgiven" (*P* 136). But no, Stephen faces a wall as he secretly confesses in a chapel "far away" in "some dark" place from the scene of the crime. His confession is an act of injustice itself, as he hears the priest say that "sin, remember, is a twofold enormity". The division lies in the flesh of the body and spirit.

The neuter criticises Stephen's being before God's name as it judges him as a double that has committed a serious crime: "Could it be that he Stephen Dedalus, had done those things? His conscious sighed in answer. Yes, he had done them, secretly, filthily, time after time" (*P* 148). Then, after encountering the images of the devils in the garden, Stephen feels the need to "confess" his sin, because he is haunted by demons. However, during his act of confession it is "words" that pour forth, and not the sin that has a liberating effect on his being which releases the crime. This act unfolds as the words "trickled" out of his mouth are given to the priest in confession. The priest suggests that Stephen, "give up that sin. It is a terrible sin. It kills the body and it kills the soul" (*P* 156). The priest describes his sexual desire as a "wretched habit" that must be stopped. Yet, he does not give any practical advice on how to solve his problem. Instead the priest offers salvation in prayers of forgiveness to a mythical image in another world disconnected from reality. Once, again after he has released his confession, the religious exegesis of being put on trial at the limit-experience culminates into forgiveness. Indeed, the act of confession releases the evil sin that is poured into the ear of the priest, and this in turn cleans the convicted soul.

Following the act of confession, Stephen's self-consciousness shows signs of being overtly responsible for each individual action that he performs in the everyday life. He becomes obsessed with separating his body of pleasure in regard to sight,

sound, smell and touch as he pushes his being to the extreme limit as a means of becoming pure thought abstention. Stephen deprives his being to the point that “prayers and fasts” become an aversion. His acts of separation lead to self-exile as he punishes his being that is being cleaned from impurities related to the evil seen in the exterior flesh. The neuter tells us “his soul traversed a period of desolation in which the sacraments themselves seemed to have turned into dried up sources” (*P* 164). He then evaluates the exchange offered to him in the experience of “surrender” as he proceeds to “doubt” the “Father, Who had created him” (*P* 164). The subject identifies with “pictures” in the books, but is unable to “merge his life in the common tide of other lives” (*P* 164). His ethics of separation mirror the act of cleansing, while the problem of being for the subject is reduced to being “inaccessible” itself.⁴¹³ In accord, the name of God can only be traced by its very effacement in itself.⁴¹⁴ His departure into a negative theology is the negation of moving to nothing in absence.⁴¹⁵

The pivotal point of Stephen’s departure towards a negative theology is illuminated after the director of the Church asks him to make a decision. At this point in time, the neuter muffles Stephen’s voice when he is asked if he wants to join the Church. He is not able to speak when called to respond to the final call. Instead, his self-consciousness is diverted to Victor Hugo, who turned against the Church to become a fiction writer. Here, Stephen’s being turns away from the Church and the priests whom he feels no connection with in life. As such, his being reverses positions in his method of confronting the problem of justice and being at the limit. His being is enlightened to a call as he stumbles on his journey home. There is no doubt in his

⁴¹³ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 184.

⁴¹⁴ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 205.

⁴¹⁵ See John Llewelyn, *The Genealogy of Ethics: Emmanuel Levinas* (London: Routledge: London), p. 152. The neuter’s description of Stephen’s departure from Christianity toward a negative theology resembles the Hebrew / Greek chiasmic “*drash*”. Here the notion of the *drash* is a symbolic testament for being at the limit to God’s absent presence: “the non-Nothing circumscribes as inner limit the infinity of all that is not anything. An affinity is affirmed: God’s infinite essence, his infinite actuality”.

mind that once he confronts the everyday image of his father's home in the real that he makes his final decision to follow the home below and not the fathers above. His father's home offers the musical sound of a return to his childhood that ushers in the everyday portrait of life: "Goneboro toboro lookboro atboro aboro house boro" (P 171). Ironically, the home that answers the final call for the uprooted nomadic being is a home that is without a "dwelling" heard in sound: "Why are we on the move again . . . Becauseboro theboro landboro lordboro willboro putboro usboro out" (P 177).

Stephen comes to realise that it is the sound of the everyday life and not in an imaginary afterlife, which awakens his call to be a poetic artist. Blanchot argues: "Renunciation is truly God in us. And through him, when we transform this passive abandonment . . . into an active abandonment . . . we can recapture all that we lack".⁴¹⁶ The neuter premeditates the fact that it is the word spoken in the immediate that calls Stephen's being to be an artist: "Did he then love the rhythmic rise and fall of words better than their associations of legend and colour?" (P 180) It is the sounds that awaken his desire to search "beyond the world" as his presence slips in a dream. Like the piper the neuter, describes Stephen's awakening to the image of the artificer. Here, the subject faces an instant in time as he awakens to a desire to escape. This begins in image of "waves" that take him up high into the sky. He is seen as the artificer flying upwards to freedom, as "a winged form flying above the waves and slowly climbing the air. What did it mean?" (P 183) Stephen's presence mirrors the Greek hero Dedalus escaping like the "hawklike man flying sunward above the sea, a prophecy of the end that he had been born to serve" (P 183). The subject flies towards the infinite sky free as a bird, just as his inner being yearns to break free into liberty.

⁴¹⁶ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 117.

The image of the girl that stands “midstream” brings Stephen’s being face to face with Blanchot’s theory of living “the image as an event”.⁴¹⁷ The neuter presents the girl’s image deflected before the creative space, which is envisaged in the birdlike image of the artificer souring into the unknown. Stephen’s being faces the girl’s image, “yet does it ‘really’ take place?”⁴¹⁸ Here, a revelation unfolds as he recognises his calling in an instant of “duplicity”: “Heavenly God! cried Stephen’s soul, in an outburst of profane joy” (*P* 186). The subject awakens to the fact that his calling resides in “her” image that represents beauty. Beauty is symbolic of the “good” that stirs his sensations and draws him towards the “vitalizing negation” tied to “the static man” that has “no end”.⁴¹⁹ As a result, this limit-experience of ecstasy remains unspeakable in the frission with a secret that only the spirit can recognise in absolute separation: “Her image had passed into his soul for ever and no word had broken the holy silence of his ecstasy. Her eyes had called him and his soul had leaped at the call” (*P* 186). The neuter states that Stephen’s encounter with the image of the “wild angel” evokes an awakening to love, which he now desires to act and “recreate life out of life” (*P* 186). His wakening to the “instant” seizes his vision to be an artist, as he withdraws life from the image in recreation, thus removing the essence of the thing.

Stephen’s experience of living “an event as an image” manifests itself into a desire for unity with the absent feminine space, as he searches for an origin in truth in life. His search for inspiration is divided between two different types of women’s images. The first is the pure, virginal image of Emma and the second image is the corrupt image of the whore. Both representations of femininity seduce his being. However, it is the physical experience of evil that taints his image of the virgin he craves. Here, he returns to poems that he had written to Emma “after ten years”, as he

⁴¹⁷ Blanchot, *The Gaze of Orpheus*, p. 88.

⁴¹⁸ Blanchot, *The Gaze of Orpheus*, p. 88.

⁴¹⁹ Blanchot, *The Gaze of Orpheus*, p. 87.

questions whether his desire is mere “folly!” (P 241) Emma’s image torments his desire as he struggles to understand the lure of her force that spurs his passion to create verse in the act of poetics itself. As such, he begins to feel anguish, “to feel that he wronged her. A sense of her innocence moved him almost to pity her, an innocence that he had never understood till he had come to the knowledge of it through sin” (P 241). The neuter questions Stephen’s affliction as he struggles to contain the excess of desire that tears his being apart before the “dark shame of womanhood” (P 242). While “man is unmade according to his image”, the subject feels the responsibility of God’s “ardent ways” while he struggles to find unity in being in his calling in life.⁴²⁰

The neuter recognises that if Stephen does not put his pen to paper, he is not an artist. Thus, the subject “fearing to lose all, he raised himself suddenly on his elbow to look for paper and pencil” as he begins to “write out the stanzas” (P 243). This scene resembles Stephen’s act of renunciation at he confesses his guilt that is poured out into the ears of a priest. The text questions his being that feels redemption: “Are you not weary of ardent ways, / Lure of the fallen seraphim? / Tell no more of enchanted days” (P 242). The verse then questions his being while it calls him to respond to the problem of the other, while he repeats the questioner’s question: “Your eyes have set man’s heart ablaze / And you have had your will of him / Are you not weary of ardent ways?” (P 242) This line of verse suggests that he is offering his verse to a female form that feeds the masculine desire for unity. The question returns with a response: “Above the flame the smoke or praise / Goes up from ocean rim to rim / Tell no more of enchanted days” (P 242). It is clear that the response suggests that his being must put a stop to his sinful ways. However, the next stanza unites the male and female contraries in an image of the Christian sacrament itself: “Our broken

⁴²⁰ Blanchot, *The Gaze of Orpheus*, p. 85.

cries and mournful lays / Rise in one Eucharistic hymn. / Are you not weary of ardent ways” (*P* 242). The final lines of the stanza repeat over doubling, haunting the being.

The two voices in the written verse signify that the question, which offers itself in the gift of language, is withdrawn in the self-reflective response. It is important to note “the limit-experience is the response man encounters when he has decided to put himself radically in question”.⁴²¹ Thus, the ringing of the “enchanted days” repeated in every second stanza can be seen as a direct response to the question of being at the limit to knowledge before the disjuncture of “ardent ways” (*P* 242). Good and evil thoughts correspond to the masculine and feminine voices that echo back in the rhyming sound exchanged. Hence, the answer is offered in the exchange to the question, but there is no end to the circle of exchange. Clearly, the images demand a response that no answer can satisfy. Here we can stop to note the “erasure” of language that circles “absence”. This verse is the epitome of Stephen’s passion of negative thought, in search of an origin in the space of the word. He recognises that his desire is displaced in the image at the limit, even though he is not able to find solace in God’s name, nor Emma’s image, nor the whore’s image. Thus, while he becomes the artist in the space of literature by putting pen to paper, he remains torn at a limit as his desire spills over into another form of duplicity as his being splits open.

This chapter revealed that Stephen’s being was primarily called into question by the unknown voices in the anterior. The neuter followed the subject’s trials and tribulation of being called into question by his family, peers, priests, and teachers. Indeed, the neuter was privy to the duplicity of being that was narrated by the secretive presence that was in effect a double. Here the experience of alterity unfolded for the subject that was put under a microscope and questioned from the exteriority.

⁴²¹ Blnachot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 203.

Stephen's justification of being before the images of hell and redemption led to a desire for reconciliation following the guilt and torment of the lived experience to being in the flesh. However, his failure to find solace in the practice of confession led him into further doubt and affliction from suffering before an unknown God. He recognised that he was separated from God's name and that he had to respond to a call from the here and now of the everyday life. Indeed, Stephen found solace in the calling of the image of his father's home here on earth and not the Church. It was the sounds that seduced his being and the image of the girl that finally led his being to open up to his creativity exegesis depicted in the image of the free bird souring. Ironically, the act of writing attests to the free spirit in the poetics that fails to capture the real thing. Thus, the problem of alterity will be examined further in the dialectical exegesis of negativity for Stephen's being that is called into question in *Stephen Hero*.

CHAPTER THREE

Negative Dialectics in *Stephen Hero*

“The speech of dialectics does not exclude, but seeks to include the moment of discontinuity: it moves from one term to its opposite, for example, from Being to Nothingness. But what is between the two opposites? A nothingness more essential than Nothingness itself—the void of an interval that continually hollows itself out and in hollowing itself out becomes distended: the nothing as work and movement”.⁴²²

This chapter will examine Stephen’s “being” in relation to the speech of “negative dialectics” in *Stephen Hero*. In addition, Blanchot’s writing on the neuter will be discussed in relation to the narrative that questions the subject’s experience, from the exteriority. The subject’s negative thought unfolds by way of putting the self into “question” before the “other” man, through dialectical discourse. Essentially, dialectical discourse presents itself in Stephen’s poetic theory of being in relation to literature as he questions the limit in the “final question—question of God, question of being, question of difference between being and what is” present.⁴²³ Here, the subject’s questioning being in relation to language leads to a series of limit-experiences as he returns to the ethic of responsibility that unfolds in unequal relations. As such, when the dialectic is put into practice the problem of being in relation to the other man reveals a limit. This limit is separation and distance that exists in between all relations, which is related to the problem of language. Ironically, Stephen’s search for a poetic theory marks the limit and bars him unity in just relations. It is evident that language is the limit that draws his being towards a pre-Christian belief seen in classical Greek thinking, which privileges the everyday spoken word over the mythical image of Christ. From this point onwards, Stephen

⁴²² Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 7.

⁴²³ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 15.

negates relations byway of Jewish thought which unfolds through a reversal of perspectives. In fact, Nadel argues, “for some, Joyce as a ‘Jew’ may only be an alluring myth, but for others, it is the key to understanding his life”.⁴²⁴ Indeed, Stephen’s revolt against Christianity shows a return to the Jewish ethic of negativity and separation as a means of weighing just relations. The problem of being in relation to negativity will be examined in Stephen’s relation to Father Butt, McCann, Madden, Wells, Dillon, Temple, Cranly, Maurice, Isobel, Emma, his mother, and his father.

In Ways of Man, Martin Buber describes the ethical relationship between “God and man and man and man”.⁴²⁵ His Jewish ethics may help to shed light on Stephen’s act of responding to the question of being before the other man, byway of a reversal of perspectives.⁴²⁶ Buber’s ethics foreground man’s awakening to Jewish responsibility that stems from the belief that man sees himself as a “co-worker with God”.⁴²⁷ Man’s response to the “voice” of God that questions his being is relevant to Stephen’s consciousness that searches for “truth” before the negative image of the other man embedded in the word.⁴²⁸ In Genesis, Buber singles out the fact that God asks Adam, “where are you”, because “he wants to produce an effect in man”.⁴²⁹ Indeed, the question that God devised in the awakening prompts man to recognise his position in the world. As a result, God asks Adam: “So many years and days of those allotted to you have passed, and how far have you gotten in your world?”⁴³⁰ Here, Buber alludes to the fact man needs to know where he stands in relation to all. It is pertinent to note that while Christianity “makes each man’s salvation his highest aim, Judaism regards each man’s soul is a serving member of God’s creation, which by

⁴²⁴ Nadel, *Joyce and the Jews*, p. 242.

⁴²⁵ Martin Buber, *The Ways of Man* (London: Routledge, 1994), p. x.

⁴²⁶ Buber, *The Ways of Man*, p. 26.

⁴²⁷ Buber, *The Ways of Man*, p. 5.

⁴²⁸ Buber, *The Ways of Man*, pp. 6-7.

⁴²⁹ Buber, *The Ways of Man*, p. 5.

⁴³⁰ Buber, *The Ways of Man*, p. 4.

man's work is the Kingdom of God".⁴³¹ Man's response is now in the place of the question for God, who himself does not question.⁴³² Thus, the question of responsibility arises in the wakening of being a "lack" in the negativity of language. Here, language is separate to the flesh of the body that houses the spirit, but it is also a presence that justifies life. Thus while, language is the limit to existence for being in the word, language is a gift given to man by God that it comes from the exteriority.

According to Blanchot, the ethical Jewish being cultivates itself in the negative thought of "separation" in being a "foreigner" that justifies a truth.⁴³³ Indeed, the response of moral law and human righteousness demanded from the Jew is first recognised by the father of Judaism, Abraham.⁴³⁴ Abraham answers a call from an unknown God described in the Torah whom reveals the Law of *Berit*.⁴³⁵ Correspondingly, the Israelite is "bound by a word" and his demand of "human right" presents itself in the testimony to God's call through his act of "separation".⁴³⁶ Here, the Jew is from this decision in "exile" and bound by a revelation of speech that makes him "infinitely distant".⁴³⁷ Thus, the Jew is seen as the stranger, estranged to the self, other than being-in-itself, while being in between, torn, divided, and always in exodus.⁴³⁸ Indeed, Blanchot testifies to the fact that "being Jewish" signifies an ethics of alterity, which stems from a negative condition where "truth of the beginning is in separation".⁴³⁹ He proceeds to argue that negative thought reveals a "truth" related to an "irreducible relation" to language.⁴⁴⁰ For the Jew, God remains separate

⁴³¹ Buber, *The Ways of Man*, p. 26.

⁴³² Hart, *The Dark Gaze*, p. 163.

⁴³³ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 126.

⁴³⁴ Epstein, *Judaism*, p. 12.

⁴³⁵ The word "Berit" refers to the Jewish custom of circumcision.

⁴³⁶ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 125.

⁴³⁷ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 126.

⁴³⁸ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 128.

⁴³⁹ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 126.

⁴⁴⁰ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 125.

to man and hidden “beneath the letter” of the word.⁴⁴¹ It is in the text that God resides as a passage.⁴⁴² Here, God is present only in his absence, because the Torah teaches that man’s relation to the sacred forbids any sign of belief in a false idol. Hence, truth lies in the ethical relation between the man and word that consists of a dialectical thinking in reversal of positions, which shows that the negative comes from Outside.

For Blanchot, the “question of everything” comes to the subject from a “dialectical exegesis” of “two opposing regions”.⁴⁴³ This ethic recalls Levinas’ Jewish account of the “ethics and the face” in being in exteriority.⁴⁴⁴ However, Blanchot argues that there is a dissymmetry in the relationship between the subject and object, because distance entails “a relation to infinity”.⁴⁴⁵ Furthermore, he argues that distance of “separation” is reconciled in a form of alterity in Jewish thought that is seen in the logic of “reversal”.⁴⁴⁶ This begins with the breath of speech, which is seen as “the promised land where exile fulfils itself in sojourn”.⁴⁴⁷ The vision of breath in life is relevant to Stephen’s desire for unity with the voices that call his being into question from the exterior. Correspondingly, this revelation runs in accord with Blanchot’s reading of Jacob’s encounter with God. Here, Blanchot describes the division of decision whereby man faces God as death in the distance: “whoever sees God risks his life. Whoever encounters the other can relate to him only through mortal violence or through the gift of speech”.⁴⁴⁸ He argues that the relation with the other man is a relation with “distance” maintained in the gift of death.⁴⁴⁹ Thus, the positive aspect of absence reversed to a negative thought affirms an “excess” of being that

⁴⁴¹ Epstein, *Judaism*, 235.

⁴⁴² Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 127.

⁴⁴³ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 18.

⁴⁴⁴ Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, pp. 197-201.

⁴⁴⁵ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 6.

⁴⁴⁶ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 251.

⁴⁴⁷ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 128.

⁴⁴⁸ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 129.

⁴⁴⁹ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 128.

remains irreducible. Furthermore, the language of the Torah “is not a matter of being at home there but of being Outside, engaged in a movement” and bound by a word.⁴⁵⁰ To speak a word is to seek the origin in the “prefix of the words exile, exodus”.⁴⁵¹

From the outset, Stephen’s being adopts the dialectical Jewish thought that coincides with Mallarmé’s theory of “poetics”.⁴⁵² Stephen like Mallarmé is obsessed with replacing religion with art as he searches for an origin in being.⁴⁵³ So too, Mallarmé’s poetics influenced Blanchot’s theory of literature, which focuses on the materiality of the word and the “book is often described as a tomb”.⁴⁵⁴ Here too, Derrida also follows Mallarmé in the sense that every word is a contradiction that can be used in a currency of exchange. Derrida argues the word is “also the dissection of a corpse”.⁴⁵⁵ Stephen rethinks the question of language in terms of a metamorphosis of being exchanged in “negation” with the “common word” (*SH* 14).⁴⁵⁶ As such, Stephen deploys Mallarmé’s metaphor of the coin for language to depict the sliding twofold movement that takes place between the subject and the object divided in two slopes: “Words, he said have a certain value in the literary tradition and a certain value in the market place—a debased value” (*SH* 14). He brings to light the negative aspect of language, “words are simply receptacles for human thought” (*SH* 27). In effect, the words have a different value in the “literary tradition” than the “market-place” (*SH* 27). Recycling Mallarmé’s theory of duplicity in everyday language, Stephen argues language has the power to transform lives used “so glibly”. Here, being in the word “consists as much in the concealment as in the revelation of construction” (*SH* 25).

⁴⁵⁰ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 125.

⁴⁵¹ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 128.

⁴⁵² See Peter Nicholls, “Breaking the Rules: Symbolism in France”, in *Modernism* (Macmillan Press: London, 1995), pp. 24-42.

⁴⁵³ See Stéphane Mallarmé, *Collected Poems*, trans. E. H. and A. H. Blackmore (Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 2006), p. xvii.

⁴⁵⁴ Derrida, *Acts of Literature*, p. 113.

⁴⁵⁵ Derrida, *Acts of Literature*, p. 113.

⁴⁵⁶ Nicholls, *Modernism*, p. 34.

Stephen's experience of the symbolic nature of language reveals itself in his reading of the first "quatrain of Byron's poem" (*SH* 26). It is evident that the subject applies his poetic theory of separation to sound, while he analyses language through a method of breaking apart through the "act of verbal destruction".⁴⁵⁷ Nadel claims that for the Jew, "truth" is "in fact auditory not visual", since, "the Jew God created the world through speech which was then written down".⁴⁵⁸ Stephen's being-in-itself alludes to the fact that truth exists in the space of the rhythm he perceives, in the actual speech of breath. He responds to the sound of Father Butt's voice with hostility: "Father Butt's reading of verse and the schoolgirl's accurate reading of verse most intolerable" (*SH* 26). He separates the stresses in syllables as a means of uncovering meaning in his reading of Byron's poem (*SH* 26). The reading of the poem depicts the speaker's desire for unity with the "days" passed by. Strikingly, the contrasting images reveal as they conceal the object displaced in the metaphors of mourning. Indeed, the imagery of the subject's mourning the lost object is visualised in "love gone". Clearly the experience of death manifests itself like an open wound in the experience of negativity arising in response to the "excess" of being. He awakens to the trauma of experience as he faces the death of the thing that is lost in time, while desire for unity is signified in the chain of metaphors that fill in a lack of presence.

A "religious fervour" ushers in Stephen's revelation that the lost presence has transferred to a negative experience with language. Here, the subject's portrait is comparable to Bataille's anguish of the "inner-experience" of "limitlessness".⁴⁵⁹ This experience with language runs in accord with Blanchot's notion of the "limit-

⁴⁵⁷ Nicholls, *Modernism*, p. 35.

⁴⁵⁸ Nadel, *Joyce and the Jews*, p. 116,

⁴⁵⁹ Bataille, *Inner Experience*, p. 52.

experience” as the subject responds to the question of being.⁴⁶⁰ This begins as Stephen blurs the boundaries between meaning and knowledge as he questions sounds. He states that he collects words from everyday “plodding public” for his “treasure-house” (SH 29). He repeats words over and over to “himself till they lost all instantaneous meaning for him and became wonderful vocables” (SH 30). The encounter with negativity reduces language to the silence of absence in a “hole-word hollowed out”, while a “fervour fit of holiness lay upon him” (SH 29).⁴⁶¹ The scene turns to a violent encounter with the unknown presence “buried”, as he separates the words meaning from the real thing in the struggle with the “hell of hells” (SH 30). Paradoxically, the image of fire stands in for the all “found” and lost in the duality present in “speech”. Stephen’s limit-experience with the missing thing leads to a belief that he must wait for the “Eucharist” to come, while he constructs “a house of silence” (SH 30). Subsequently, he hears a voice call out in his ear of the “tympanum” as a “flame” leaps in his “divine cerebral life” (SH 30).⁴⁶² He finally “obeys the command” to “wander” home as he pieces “together” fragments of “meaningless words” (SH 31). The house of being in language is destroyed by the sounds that are now inaudible.

The subject’s negative thought is pushed to the extreme limit in the experience with language that is akin to a negative theology. This experience manifests itself in the image of an internal “monster” that questions the sum for being that “NON-KNOWLEDGE LAYS BARE” (SH 29).⁴⁶³ At this point, Stephen’s separated being suffers from the torment and desire to control language. Ironically this thought is

⁴⁶⁰ See Hill, *Blanchot: Extreme Contemporary*, p. 93. Hill sums up Blanchot’s concept of the limitless limit in “the limit” that becomes suspended when “the limitlessness beyond the limit limits the limit by turning its law into a secondary, derived entity” in “demand” of “infinite fragmentation”.

⁴⁶¹ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 385.

⁴⁶² See Jacques Derrida, *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1986), p. x-xxix. Derrida argues that the tympanum is “the limit which is not a limit”. Here, Derrida compares “being” under the erasure of the tympanum as being akin to a “mystic writing pad”.

⁴⁶³ Bataille, *Inner Experience*, p. 52.

contrasted with the fact that language escapes possession in the negation. Here, language produces a crisis as “vocables” turn his self-consciousness around in a circle (SH 30). The return to an unknown presence follows the limit-experience of “what comes beyond the grave”.⁴⁶⁴ Indeed, he faces language as a seismic paradigm of pleasure and pain as silence conceals his being that is held hostage: “TO THE EXTENT THAT IT IS A MONSTER”.⁴⁶⁵ Stephen’s being-in-itself is surrounded by the materiality of language that presents images rolling up and rolling out of sounds, which circle his mind. Like the “scroll” of the Torah, words surround his being as they question his presence that is an object. Indeed, Stephen resembles “Thomas the obscure” who is literally read by the words, as roles reverse in the mad struggle with a beast.⁴⁶⁶ So too, Stephen yearns to dominate the sacred space of language as he tries to control the distance that separates him from “all”. He seeks solace in the mediation of this thought that reveals a “metaphysical desire” for freedom.⁴⁶⁷ But, instead, he is impassioned by the words that afflict his negative thought that yearns to break free.

Stephen’s fascination with the poetic sound recalls the mythical hero Ulysses who is seduced by silent siren calls.⁴⁶⁸ Blanchot names the writer’s encounter with the poetic song of Ulysses sirens as an experience of “rhapsody”.⁴⁶⁹ The experience of rhapsody shares traits with Bataille’s theory of the inner-experience that grips Stephen at the limit of affliction.⁴⁷⁰ This event is an “awakening” of desire that must be overcome in the creative seduction that is compared to “a song from the abyss”.⁴⁷¹

⁴⁶⁴ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 386.

⁴⁶⁵ Bataille, *Inner Experience*, p. 92.

⁴⁶⁶ Blanchot, “Thomas the Obscure”, *The Station Hill Blanchot Reader*, p. 68.

⁴⁶⁷ See Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, p. 33. Levinas argues that metaphysical desire is a form of alterity that is entirely and “absolutely other”. He states that for “Desire this alterity” is the alterity of the Other. This desire is not the same as “hunger” for food; it arises from a philosophically Jewish nature.

⁴⁶⁸ Homer, *The Odyssey*, trans. W. H. Rouse (New York: The new American Library, 1958), p. 129.

⁴⁶⁹ See Maurice Blanchot, *Awaiting Oblivion*, trans. John Gregg (London: University of Nebraska Press, 1990), p. xvii. Gregg states, Blanchot’s reading of Homer’s “rhapsody” is in “rapport with alterity”.

⁴⁷⁰ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, 390.

⁴⁷¹ Blanchot, *The Gaze of Orpheus*, p. 106.

Blanchot states that “rhapsodic mode of composition” is a “perpetual repetition”.⁴⁷² Indeed, the space of language draws his being towards the gaps of space in death in the “hope” of a “beyond”.⁴⁷³ Likewise Stephen’s memory is “doubled backwards into the past”, as his presence faces the problem of Ulysses’ “Isolation” (*SH* 33). He too is carried away by sailors to a strange land as he confronts the calls of the mythical creatures without music: “he seemed almost to hear the simple cries of fear and joy and wonder which are antecedent to all song, the savage rhythms of men pulling at the oar” (*SH* 33). He is uprooted by barbaric sounds that separate and join his being together, as he tries to carve out a “line of order, to reduce the abysses of the past to order by a diagram” (*SH* 33). Stephen’s labour of “research” yearns for a new origin in the poetics that lure him toward a “secret”.⁴⁷⁴ Here, his desire to be an artist is fuelled by the crossing over into the space of death that elicits his rhapsody in being.

The “space of death” is central to Blanchot’s writing on Orphic desire which stems from negative thought also present in Stephen’s dialectical exegesis.⁴⁷⁵ Indeed, Stephen’s desire for domination of the creative space leads to a journey into the unknown word. While Stephen reads his poem to Maurice, the death’s space ushers in an experience of being enclosed in an unknown circle. He declares he that he has “abandoned his Madonna” and the “evil dream of love” (*SH* 36). His mind refuses to let go of the presence “circling” in the poem that offers a secret place to dwell in the imagery of “white circling arms”.⁴⁷⁶ However, the pure image of the “circling” returns to the muse of self-consciousness that is akin to Blanchot’s theory of death: “man *is* starting from his death. He ties himself tight to his death with a tie of which he is

⁴⁷² Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, 390.

⁴⁷³ Blanchot, *The Gaze of Orpheus*, p. 106.

⁴⁷⁴ See Derrida and Ferraris, *A Taste for the Secret*, p. 58. Derrida states that the “absolute secret” of *tout autre* is “death”.

⁴⁷⁵ Blanchot, *The Space of Literature*, pp. 85-146.

⁴⁷⁶ Blanchot, *The Space of Literature*, p. 37.

judge”.⁴⁷⁷ The tie is the circle of language central to the “Orphic space”.⁴⁷⁸ It is clear that the speaker mourns the loss of the subject’s indwelling while he faces desolation. Indeed, the poetic reading has a strange effect on Stephen as the words exchanged in the conversation can only to be resurrected into another form of separation. His being reveals a fragmented and broken portrait of subjectivity crossing over in the metamorphosis. Furthermore, the speech in the poetic space of silent sounds offer Stephen hope in the revelation of something sacred to come as letters shield him from death. He breaks down and suffers “frenetic outbursts” in the pain of “loneliness”.⁴⁷⁹

The subject’s being-in-itself breaks apart before the thought of language just as Stephen begins to reconstruct “the word letter by letter” in his search for a purer poetics (*SH* 32). This begins as he reassembles sounds “permuted and combined” in the “five vowels” (*SH* 32). The desire to recreate a new poetic language is a labour of death, destruction and dissemination. Accordingly, Nadel claims that: “Moses destruction of the first set of tablets” is depicted in “Mosaic analogy” as a means of constructing Judaic parallels.⁴⁸⁰ Indeed, Stephen separates and rejoins the text together in the fabric of “verses to fix the most elusive of his moods and he put his lines together not word by word but letter by letter” (*SH* 32). Moreover, Nadel notes that: “Derrida found in this rupture the very source of writing . . . between the fragments of the broken Tablets the poem grows and right to speech takes root”.⁴⁸¹ Nadel refers to Edmond Jabès’s writing on Moses, the father of the creation of the book. She notes that “breaking was a lesson for Moses from the Jews that forced the book to become human”.⁴⁸² Once the book is metaphorically destroyed, the new text

⁴⁷⁷ Blanchot, *The Space of Literature*, p. 96.

⁴⁷⁸ Blanchot, *The Space of Literature*, p. 142.

⁴⁷⁹ Blanchot, *The Space of Literature*, p. 32.

⁴⁸⁰ Nadel, *Joyce and the Jews*, p. 89.

⁴⁸¹ Nadel, *Joyce and the Jews*, p. 89.

⁴⁸² Nadel, *Joyce and the Jews*, p. 89.

is reconstructed; “the book is always born from a broken book”, just as “the word too is born from a broken word”.⁴⁸³ Derrida’s reading by way of destruction, exemplifies Stephen’s “displacement of language” as a method of “rupturing its original writing and exiling the word”.⁴⁸⁴ He separates thought by displacement as a means of creating.

In the essay titled “Art and Life”, Stephen presents his poetic method of separation and displacement in the dialectics of negativity as he breaks apart the domain of language that houses being. He argues that art is the “human disposition of intelligible or sensible matter for an esthetic end” (*SH* 77). He dissects literature as he identifies three significant elements of classical literary criticism to question the space of language. These elements are the “lyrical, epical and dramatic” (*SH* 77). “Lyric art” is described as the relation between the split being-in-the-self and being for-the-self. He states, “epical art” is “being-for-others, and “dramatic art” is described as being in language (*SH* 77). Stephen stresses that “separation” is the primary point of identification that marks the difference between the subject and the object in question. He describes the literary forms for the subject that exists in relation to the “image”, “art”, and “energy” which is transferred over (*SH* 77). The artist’s role is therefore characterised as the “mediator between the world of his experience and the world of his dreams” (*SH* 77). Thus, the artist must have “twin faculties” to form a synthesis in the art that describes a metamorphosis for the subject to object, while form is carried over into “other” as matter. His aim warrants a shift in the focus of the myth to the everyday life of the here “now”, as he portrays the modern spirit of being in poetics.

At this point, Stephen’s poetic theory overlaps with aspects of “the Jewish question” of being seen in the ethical practice of separation in dialectical thought. Indeed, Stephen presents a spiritual anarchy that develops out of a revolt for unity in

⁴⁸³ Nadel, *Joyce and the Jews*, p. 90.

⁴⁸⁴ Nadel, *Joyce and the Jews*, pp. 89-90.

all relations divided by distance. He argues that there is a conflict between the image and thing that emerges from the “middle region” of “apex and base, between poetry and the chaos of unremembered writing” (*SH* 78). The middle region is an open “realm” in between relations that ground the difference (*SH* 78). This dialectic argues that the mind must juxtapose the separate contraries that exist in relation to difference in the equation of “(twin) faculties” (*SH* 78). Moreover, the artist that is able to separate the two entities of the image of the object (word) from the thing (soul) and transport it into another “chosen” (language) form, is the artist that will “discover the hidden secret” of knowledge (*SH* 78). Ironically, Stephen alludes to the fact that the spiritual essence of the thing remains unnameable, because “there is” distance between the image and the word. He claims: “the same and joyful spirit issues forth and achieves imperishable perfection” (*SH* 78). Essentially, he affirms that art “should do no violence to the gift”.⁴⁸⁵ The gift of God’s presence remains hidden in the word, which brings us back to the fact that all man has in life is language to negate being.

Stephen’s belief in the dialectical theory of art culminates into further signs of negative thought. Negative thought dominates Stephen’s conversation with his mother on the question of art. He states that his aim is to destroy the myths created by the Church and return to the real world of the everyday as seen in the art of Henrik Ibsen. His mother states that she wants Stephen to “get on with life” and to move beyond the imaginary world of literature. He is enraged by her blunt response: “no, no, no . . . that kind of life I often loathe” (*SH* 85). Ironically, Stephen refuses to be part of the “ugly” social order that he sees reflected in the home life. Eide argues that: “Stephen is unable to come into maturity as an ethical agent” because he is unable “to recognise

⁴⁸⁵ See Caputo and Scanlon, *God, the Gift, and Postmodernism*, p. 60. Derrida argues that “the gift cannot be known but it can be thought of” in light of being in relation to the sacred word of God.

his first context, the ethical habitat provided by his mother”.⁴⁸⁶ Indeed, Stephen’s conflict lies in his inability to reconcile the image of art with his home that he finds uninhabitable. Here, his mother expresses a need to escape and “enter another” life “for a time” too (*SH* 86). But Stephen tells her that art is life, “art is not an escape from life. Just the very opposite. Art on the contrary, is the very central expression of life” (*SH* 86). He argues that his poetics is opposed to the priest’s myths preached in mass, “an artist is not a fellow who dangles a mechanical heaven before the public . . . The artist out of fullness of his own life; he creates . . . Do you understand?” (*SH* 86)

The critical theory grounded in the negative thought of poetic justice manifests into further signs of a religious revolt for Stephen. His discussion with the Reverend Dillon reveals a conflict of opinion in theory. Dillon thinks that the revolutionary art theory is dangerous and the essay is corrupt. He refuses to allow Stephen to read the paper to the debating society: “I cannot encourage you to disseminate such theories among young men in the college” (*SH* 91). The theory is described as representing scandalous, radical ideas that will disrupt the current social order of teaching, “the sum total of modern unrest and modern freethinking” (*SH* 91). Stephen’s desire for a revival of a new artistic centre is condemned due to his choice of modern, atheist, dramatists such as Dante and Ibsen: “Writers who usurp the name of poet, who openly profess their atheistic doctrines and fill the minds of their readers with all the garbage of modern society. That is not art” (*SH* 91). The Reverend thinks that Stephen’s essay subverts and displaces the theory of knowledge itself: “You cannot compare Dante and Ibsen” (*SH* 92). He also states that: “One has a high moral taste aim . . . the other degrades it” (*SH* 92). The critic compares his own being in relation to the artist Ibsen, who is described as a rebellious “archangel” in the theory that demands liberty of

⁴⁸⁶ Eide, *Ethical Joyce*, p. 80.

freedom: “A social doctrine, free living, and an artistic doctrine” (*SH* 93). While the Reverend has not read Ibsen, he sides with the media’s attack on Ibsen’s stark realism.

Reverend Dillon is suspicious that Stephen’s method of comparison and reversal of juxtapositions displaces the current religious order. He distrusts the critic’s poetic method of separation, reversal and difference. Furthermore, the Reverend states: “You are a paradoxist . . . a paradoxist” (*SH* 97). The Reverend notes that Stephen’s theory cannot be justified. He claims: “the greatest doctor of the church needs, immense interpretation” (*SH* 95). He proceeds to distrust “esteticism” which he sees as being essentially immoral in the description of “the vilest abomination” (*SH* 96). Essentially, he refuses to believe in Stephen’s poetics that push “logical conclusions” to a “point that would emancipate the poet from all moral laws” (*SH* 95). However, Stephen tries to justify his position before the “lassitude” of responsibility: “I pushed it to its logical conclusion the definition Aquinas has given of the beautiful” (*SH* 95). The Reverend fails to accept the artist’s interpretation of “beauty” that goes against his belief in unity. He claims that beauty is that “which satisfies the esthetic appetite and nothing more” (*SH* 95). The Reverend states that Aquinas’ refers to Christian unity “sublime—that which leads upwards” (*SH* 95). Stephen argues: “No no; that which pleases the soul in a state of sanctification, the soul seeking its spiritual good” (*SH* 95). The two men clash head-on over the critical comparison that cannot be justified, while both subject’s use of irony contributes to the problem of interpretation.

The essay written by Stephen that focuses on the question of art is also narrated by the neuter that interrupts the scene from a prophetic distance.⁴⁸⁷ Here, the neuter usurps the position of the narrative and claims that “modern ideas must find their expression . . . through the medium of the writer” (*SH* 102). The neuter disrupts

⁴⁸⁷ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 380.

the dialogue “from a distance” while it “inhabits language” in the voice of the narrator as it surrounds the subject.⁴⁸⁸ Accordingly, the subject receives a mixed reaction in response to the essay at the debating society. Whelan states that he approves of the attempt to revive “Greek art”, but Magee on the other hand is not able to reconcile Stephen’s theory that separates art from morality. Magee is surprised a “spirit” can be negative, “so hostile to the spirit of religion itself” (*SH* 102). He then doubts that Stephen comprehends his own theory, since it was the Church that created the first book, the Bible: “the Church sustained and fostered the artistic temper? Had not the drama owed its very birth to religion?” (*SH* 102) While the paper is seen as “a jingle of meaningless words and a clever presentation of vicious principles in the guise of artistic theories”, the negative reaction has a productive effect on the artist (*SH* 102). Stephen recalls his “Irish people had their own glorious literature” and one “must first have a nation before” (*SH* 103). The criticism spurs his desire to revive a new poetics centred on the Dubliners as he rethinks being in the creative space of the everyday.

Subsequently, Stephen’s theory of reversal and difference is put into practise in his conversation with Madden, regarding “nationalistic fever” (*SH* 53). The subject seeks to revolt against the dominant social order, as he refuses to side with the Catholic Church that he sees as being repressive for the individual: “Do you not see, Stephen, that they (priests) encourage the study of Irish that their flocks may be more safely protected from the ‘wolves of disbelief’” (*SH* 54). Stephen blames the tyranny of the Roman Empire for the cause of suffering in the Irish community. He argues that they have “tyranny eaten in their souls” and are responsible (*SH* 53). Madden insists that the “new movement” is political, while Stephen sees a religious “Christian sentiment” at the core of national identity. He then argues that for “several centuries

⁴⁸⁸ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 380.

of obscure fidelity” the holy presented “a tardy cardinal to an island which for him, perhaps only the ‘afterthought of Europe’” (*SH* 53). Stephen makes it clear that the English language is the centre of power that must be utilised. Madden argues: “You want our peasants to ape the gross materialism of the Yorkshire peasant?” (*SH* 54). Stephen’s vision of the current social order, conflicts with Madden’s vision of “Irish Ireland” (*SH* 54). This conversation produces another positive effect on the subject that replaces Christianity with a revival of poetics in Dublin at the centre of revolt.

Stephen’s negative thought proceeds to undermine the Catholic Church in his comparison of Maurice’s experience of confession in mass. Here, he sees his outlook pitiful as he remembers that a year ago, he resembled the image of his subservient brother, “clamouring for forgiveness and promising endless penances” (*SH* 57). Stephen distances himself from the Church as he questions his past lived experience, as he remembers his desire to cling to the unrealistic belief of “salvation” as “the Church vouchsafes to her guilty children” (*SH* 57). He recalls being seduced by the terror that “possessed him” in the face of the Catholic domination. Stephen listens to Maurice’s account of “hell today” as he shows signs of disgust and revulsion, while ignoring the question posed to him about his own mass attendance. He finds the tale of the dead drunkard absurd while Maurice fails to acknowledge where the dead go after life, even though he himself does not have the answer to the question. Stephen shows no signs of being responsible for his brother’s thought for whom he feels shame: “anyone who could contemplate the condition of his soul in such a prosaic manner was not worthy of freedom and was fit only for the severest shackles of the Church” (*SH* 58). He rejects the idea of an otherworld in hell as he reclaims the everyday now and this vision clearly shows that he takes responsibility for his being.

The drama of being a philosophical critic of language in Stephen's negative thought is contrasted to the image of the religious priest named Wells. Indeed, the subject's exchange of words brings forth an uncanny image of two men that are the antithesis of each other's portrait. Stephen asks Wells if he is in "mourning" as he mocks him. Wells states: "you don't know your Church when you see it" (*SH* 70). The two men appear as a parody of each other as they walk "side by side", critically examining each other's thought. Wells asks: "What have you been doing with yourself . . . After the esplanade girls. Silly game" (*SH* 71). Stephen the philosopher reverses the question, as he poses the other side of the question: "you have, evidently" (*SH* 71). Wells then asks Stephen, what is he going to do after college. Stephen says that he is unsure of his destiny, as an underlying tone of cynicism creeps into the conversation: "I know. On the loose, isn't that it? I've been there myself" (*SH* 71). Stephen says: "Well, not exactly". This comment reveals Wells' cynicism: "Oh of course not". Wells then suggests a "Famous book" that Stephen might be interested in reading which is "a bit immoral" (*SH* 71). Each other feel a sense of shame in being responsible for the other while facing two sides of the same coin. Wells then tells Stephen that he is going to study "theology in Paris", which is ironically the path that awaits the other who proceeds to study the word in light of negative theology (*SH* 72).

In between the spectacle played out in the dialogue on the surface, the neuter encloses in Stephen's being in order to question the image of Jesus Christ. He stops to reflect backwards while criticising the subject that he spies upon. He notes that "behind the enigmatic utterances of the word Jesus there was a very much more definite conception" to be discovered behind the movement of "theology" (*SH* 112). The neuter speaks out in the narrative that winds and unwinds Stephen's memory in

the movement of “negativity without employ”.⁴⁸⁹ Here, the neuter is speaking without the subject who is doubled over while being-in-itself is effaced. At this point, Stephen’s presence questions the figurative legacy handed down to him. We are told that the “narrative of the life of Jesus did not in any way impress him as the narrative of the life of one who was subject to others” (*SH* 111). Stephen feels that Jesus is a mythical character and not a real authentic hero. He is described as being too “remote and too passionless”.⁴⁹⁰ Ironically, his mind drifts towards the image of mother Mary whom he associates with the salvation of “spiritual affairs”. This limit encounter leads Stephen to toy with the idea of formulating a theory based on the unity of opposites in the masculine and feminine. However, he rejects both images, as he cannot identify with unity. He continues to reject Christ in the everyday while his thought is entwined in the space of the neuter that weaves his presence back to his relationships in reality.

This development brings us back to image of Jesus, who is questioned once Stephen refuses to sign a testimonial to assist with “national disputes” (*SH* 114). Indeed, he does not want to support the myth of Christ: “if we must have a Jesus” he must be real (*SH* 114). The discussion supports his disbelief in the theory that Jesus was murdered by his father and left to die on a cross. Stephen states that Jesus had a “strange” relationship with his father that killed him (*SH* 117). Ironically, Stephen states, “neither God nor man has pity” on God’s son Jesus (*SH* 117). He makes a Jewish reference to Cranly’s eating an unclean animal, which refers to the Jewish practice of eating strict kosher: “You’re no Israelite” (*SH* 118). Stephen then wanders “aimlessly about the city” just like Abraham, who was asked to kill his son by God (*SH* 119). The significance of this comparison reveals Stephen’s rejection of the

⁴⁸⁹ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 205.

⁴⁹⁰ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols/ The Antichrist*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (London: Penguin Books Ltd, 1990), p. 166. Joyce echoes Nietzsche’s inability to reconcile the fact that Christianity makes a “hero of Jesus” when God mercilessly gives his son as a sacrifice “for the sins of the guilty”.

Christian myth that Jesus is God's son. Thus, he seeks to destroy the image of Jesus, he sees as a lie. The streets are empty just as his faith is empty. He stumbles upon a church and the sounds beckon: "a new translation of the Word rolling . . . finished . . . completed" (*SH* 120). He is seduced by the rhythm of words that affect his mind with a "thayology" (atheology) that he "can't intarpit" (*SH* 121).⁴⁹¹ Once again, Stephen is lured by the sirens into a space of death and destabilised by the sacred call Outside.

There is nowhere more evident than in Stephen's conversation with Cranly, that the two slopes of understanding the question is a response. Cranly is depicted as remembering the question that "always enlarged and interpreted the doctrines for the Church side by side with Stephen's theories" (*SH* 123). The exchange of positions in the conversation resembles the description of the "amoeboid" structure in play. The amoeboid channel is theorised in the cone shape dome that depicts Stephen's infinite theory of poetics, which has no beginning and no end. In the act of remembering and forgetting, the cone's centre is hollow and it "spirals" out in "perpetual displacement of sense in a play of forms" as noted by Heath.⁴⁹² Indeed, the dialogue is a movement of negativity and contestation that keeps the cone open. Cranly is described as the half that would "receive" the "silence" and at other times he would "hammer" the "poor object" (*SH* 126). Stephen declares that Cranly's method of questioning is excessive as he inserts, "question after question when ever he had an opening" (*SH* 126). After all of the questions are answered by Stephen, Cranly is still not satisfied, for the lack in language leaves behind another space for the negative side of the question to be asked. The search for an origin in the space of the question mark reveals that the "centre of language is indeed, outside of the circle" in the space of the exteriority.⁴⁹³

⁴⁹¹ See Bataille, *Inner Experience*, p. 102. Bataille argues that Blanchot's writing questions a new theology, "which has only the unknown as its object". The unknown is linked to a sacred presence.

⁴⁹² Heath, "Ambiolences", *Post-Structuralist Joyce*, p. 36.

⁴⁹³ Derrida, *Margins of Philosophy*, p. 12.

The voice of the neuter surrounds Stephen and Maurice in the exchange of words that bridge the non-relation between man and man. The non-relation is characterised by the space of language that remains unknown. Here, Stephen states that he “reported his long conversations with Cranly of which Maurice made full notes” (*SH* 144). Language is rewritten over and transported from subject to the other being. The story retold by Maurice describes Cranly as a “rustic” character. However, Maurice states that his interpretation of rustic is a “mass of cunning and stupid and cowardly habits” (*SH* 144). Maurice then argues that Cranly only speaks when spoken “to and then he gave [gives] birth to some commonplace which he would have liked to have been able to disbelieve” (*SH* 144). Stephen replies that Maurice’s interpretation is an exaggeration of “perverse genius” (*SH* 145). Cranly is then depicted as a doubting “Thomas” who needs to “play the god to an audience” (*SH* 145). In return, Maurice suggests that roles reverse if he himself begins “to play the god”, just as he notes that “nothing” is “exchanged” (*SH* 145). It is clear that Stephen thinks that Maurice’s analysis is a unique conception of communication, and it is a method deployed by each spoken in death, which gives life to presence in absence.⁴⁹⁴ Likewise, Levinas argues that all speech is in dialogue with the language of God: “All true discourse ... is discourse with God, not a conversation held between equals.”⁴⁹⁵

Blanchot’s theory of “dying the death of the other” runs in accord with Stephen’s limit-experience as he faces Isobel’s death (*SH* 126).⁴⁹⁶ Here, Stephen experiences conflicting emotions of affliction as he sees “her life” as a “trembling walk before God” and his life free (*SH* 126). He feels that his desire to revive the

⁴⁹⁴ See Maurice Blanchot, *Friendship*, trans. Elizabeth Rottenberg (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), p. 291. Blanchot states that being in relation to language can be characterised as a friendship that includes separation between all relations: “Friendship, this relation without dependence, without episode . . . does not allow us to speak of our friends but only to speak to . . . an infinite distance”.

⁴⁹⁵ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 56.

⁴⁹⁶ See Ellmann, *James Joyce*, p. 94. Ellmann states that Stephen’s experience of Isobel’s death is modelled on Joyce’s own life experience with his brother, George’s death in 1902.

primacy of truth in the word of language saves his life. Ironically, it is death in the life of the word that gives his being liberty in the sense of rebirth in language. It is clear that Isobel's dying being has a profound effect on Stephen's negative thought as he sees language as other. Clearly, he confronts his own morality in her mirror reflection that stands before his negative thought. Indeed, he resists her presence as he senses her purity to be a threat that may destroy his revolt against unity. Thus, he keeps his distance from her being as he feels that there is no dialogue open: "The slightest interchange of ideas between them must be either condescension on his part or an attempt to corrupt" (*SH* 127). His rejection of her body leads to the fact that blood does not unite difference: "No consciousness of their nearness in blood troubled him with natural, unreasoning affection" (*SH* 127). He feels that their bond is one of "infinite distance" and he doubts that he owes a debt to her as he refuses to accept responsibility. He later confesses that he resists her blind faith. As such, he feels that his obligation is to "save himself" first as he stakes his life in death and negativity.

The subject recognises that Isobel's dying presence in relation to death is a relation of sovereign equals, even though he experiences infinite distance between them. He tells us that he still strives "to stir a fire out of her embers of life" present in the name being Isobel (*SH* 161). The "breath" of fire leitmotif recalls the Jewish belief of life in the spirit of breath. He stops himself from screaming out to Isobel: "Live live! He tries to touch her soul in the shrillness of a whistle or a vibration of a note" (*SH* 161). His relation with Isobel is a relation of death at the limit of self-possession. Indeed, the Hegelian unhappy self-consciousness faces her death as his own: "dying an unjust death".⁴⁹⁷ Images of doom envelop his mind in the imagery of dim lights that follow as the "sunless dusk enwrapped him" (*SH* 162). Further images

⁴⁹⁷ Blanchot, *The Space of Literature*, p. 91.

of bleak helplessness emerge in the reflection of the home that portrays a “shadow of decay” (*SH* 162). There is ray of hope in the “one bright insistent star of joy” that trembles while he “breathed an air of tombs” (*SH* 162). Stephen is depicted as the Jew following the distant star as the value of his own life is held hostage before the master of death. His inner-experience is in conflict with the space of death that represses his being. Gaps and silence within the text usher in the unspeakable limit. The hole left behind in life remains unnameable: “What hole? The . . . hole we all have” (*SH* 163).

Once again, Stephen literally experiences “dying the death of the other”, because the one who experiences death cannot experience the actual event.⁴⁹⁸ Here, human experience is a missed encounter with death that is at stake in the gift of life. Stephen justifies Isobel’s decision to give up on life, because he perceives that she chooses not to exist. He faces death in life at the limit as he makes his death a reality through the power of language that is a tomb: “Through death the eyes turn back, and this return is the other side”.⁴⁹⁹ His mother states that Isobel is now in the imaginary place named heaven with “God” (*SH* 165). In the face of death, Stephen is awakened to the thought that life is a gift to be exchanged in the reality of the here and now, in the word: “Life seemed to him a gift . . . ‘I am alive’” (*SH* 165). The wasted body that lies before him had merely, “existed by sufferance; the spirit that dwelt therein had literally never dared to live” (*SH* 165). Ironically, Isobel does not speak at all in the text. As a consequence, her presence shifts from absence to absence. She exists in a pure, silent void, as she did not attach “anything to herself or herself to anything” (*SH* 165). She resembles a corpus of a word that is a pure, holy, mysterious, veil: “Even her name a certain lifeless name, had held her apart from the plays of life” (*SH* 165). Isobel remains contained in the envelope of her name; she is literally a vacant symbol.

⁴⁹⁸ Blanchot, *The Space of Literature*, p. 122.

⁴⁹⁹ Blanchot, *The Space of Literature*, p. 135.

At this juncture, the subject's disagreement with his mother about his refusal to take part in the Easter Duty leads to further signs of a revolt in Christian belief. Stephen feels that his mother uses Isobel's death to bring his being face to face with responsibility (*SH* 132). Indeed, his mother tells him that she is attending High Mass, because this is the day Jesus, "Himself . . . ascended into Heaven" (*SH* 132). Stephen pluralises signs related to the image of Jesus as he seeks to destroy the myth. He begs to know: "Where did he go off? . . . Mount Olivet . . . Head first? . . . By balloon?" (*SH* 132) His mother is disappointed that Stephen mocks Christianity so crudely with his irony: "I really thought you were more intelligent . . . it's only what people who believe only in what they can see under their noses say" (*SH* 132). Stephen seeks to eclipse the myth of the character Jesus that he compares to the everyday man: "It's absurd: it's Barnum. He comes into this world God knows how, walks on water, gets out of his grave and goes up off the Hill of Howth. What drivell is this?" (*SH* 133) His mother argues that God is ethereal: "God can do all things" (*SH* 133). It is ironic that he is asked to believe in the word, which keeps on resurfacing as the centre of his problem; "to believe in . . . the word of God" (*SH* 133). It is clear that he takes the word literally as he only believes in the sacred "word" which he rips apart. His mother threatens to burn books that she blames for corrupting his knowledge of difference.⁵⁰⁰

The dialectical thought that characterises Stephen's negative desire manifests itself into a complete separation from the Church: "I have left the Church" (*SH* 138). Cranly puts Stephen on trial, but the subject rejects the guilt in lieu of his mother's belief. He acknowledges that she "will suffer very much", but still he refuses to be held responsible for her anguish (*SH* 138). Here, he refuses to follow the Pope's belief either: "I am a product of Catholicism; I was sold to Rome before my birth. Now I

⁵⁰⁰ See Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 162. Blanchot argues that Mallarmé discovers that in space difference, "disseminates itself"—and time: not the oriented homogeneity of becoming, but becoming when 'becomes scansion and intimation,' when it interrupts itself dis-continues itself".

have broken my slavery but I cannot in a moment destroy every feeling in my nature” (*SH* 139). Stephen is depicted as the Jewish being that refuses to be enslaved by the tyranny of paganism. He rejects Cranly’s argument: “Many Catholics would do the same . . . if their lives were at stake” (*SH* 139). In addition, he refuses to be seen as a hypocrite: “I will not submit to the Church” (*SH* 139). Ironically, Cranly states that he is still “speaking like a Catholic” (*SH* 139). The negative image is subverted, as Stephen resembles the nomadic archangel that defies God: “Could you not rebel in your heart and yet conform out of contempt? You could be a rebel in spirit” (*SH* 139). More importantly, Cranly argues that Stephen’s rejection of the “Son of God” mirrors Jesus’ martyrdom as his “new religion of unbelief” will “crucify him” (*SH* 140). Again, Stephen rejects the Church in the wake of retracing his roots back to pre-Christian Judaism. Clearly, his actions break apart images in the refusal of all union.

The subject’s relationship with Temple⁵⁰¹ represents another uncanny image of Stephen’s being that faces the Jewish experience in the wake of the spoken word—YHWH (HE IS THAT HE IS).⁵⁰² YHWH is another name for the sacred Jewish God that is present before Abraham.⁵⁰³ Indeed, Temple takes on an absent presence akin to the unknown word which points to something that is unspeakable. This unfolds in the speech that presupposes Stephen’s questions: “Do you believe in Jesus . . . I don’t believe in Jesus?” (*SH* 107) The subject is reduced to the “secondariness” under the gaze of another, as the unknown presence questions in the form of a response. Indeed, Temple offers “no rest”: “Course I don’t know . . . if you believe in Jesus. I believe in Man . . . If you b’lieve in Jesus?” (*SH* 107) Temple’s voice hovers around Stephen’s self-consciousness in the form of a double as his inner thoughts await answers to

⁵⁰¹ Epstein, *Judaism*, p. 36. The name “Temple” has a Jewish connotation associated with the building for Israelites, by Solomon. It was symbolic of the “idea of God who remained enthroned invisible”.

⁵⁰² Epstein, *Judaism*, p. 16.

⁵⁰³ Epstein, *Judaism*, p. 21.

questions. The subject's ethical experience of Temple's questioning questions, elicit atheism of negative thought: "Did you think . . . he was a bloody cod too . . . I'm a rationalist. I don't believe in any religion" (*SH* 108). The voice that speaks demands recognition in spite of separation. Temple begs the question as an answer: "What is . . . what is?" (*SH* 109) The unnameable object that is put into question in "that" in the word is an invisible presence that reverts back to the textual space of the unknown. Here, the unknown is related back to the question of language that is now scrutinised.

Stephen echoes Nietzsche's attack on the dogma of Christianity as he proceeds to claim that Jesus was a "conscious impostor" (*SH* 141).⁵⁰⁴ Nietzsche argues that there is an "error to be found in language" that is related to the "purely fictitious world"⁵⁰⁵ of "false coinage"⁵⁰⁶ symbolic of the "hero Jesus".⁵⁰⁷ So too, Stephen argues that he does not believe in Jesus' "chastity", because he has too much of an insight into "loose women" (*SH* 141). Here Stephen destabilises the myth of Christ that ushers in his quest for freedom: "Jesus or the Church—it's all the same to me. I can't follow him. I must have liberty" (*SH* 141). Stephen states that his "escape" from Christianity "excites" him before the prospect of being a libertine: "I must talk as I do. I feel a flame in my face. I feel a wind rush through me" (*SH* 142). He refuses to "postpone life—till when? Life is now—this is life: if I postpone it I may never live" (*SH* 142). Thus, Stephen demands liberty in the face of the "imaginary" as he sees himself as Abraham called into question before all other nations. He proclaims that his desire is "to walk nobly on the surface of the earth, to express oneself without pretence, to acknowledge one's own humanity" (*SH* 142). Ironically, he states that his exodus speaks out from his "soul" which feeds into his spiritual poetics. He refuses to

⁵⁰⁴ See Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols/ The Anti-Christ*, p. 135. Nietzsche argues that in "Christianity neither morality nor religion comes into contact with reality at any point".

⁵⁰⁵ Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols/ The Anti-Christ*, p. 135.

⁵⁰⁶ Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols/ The Anti-Christ*, p. 160.

⁵⁰⁷ Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols/ The Anti-Christ*, p. 151.

be enslaved by a false master. He chooses “philosophy, love, (and) art” with the holy spoken word at the centre of his new found belief in the everyday language (*SH* 143).

It is apparent that Stephen’s confrontation with the bleak images of poverty in the streets of Dublin call for a response. Here, the subject meditates on being in “exodus” while he shows further signs of negativity and revolt that coincides with “being Jewish”.⁵⁰⁸ Stephen feels guilt as he faces the depressing images of poor, “young boys and girls with colourless expressionless faces” seen suffering in the dirty streets of Dublin (*SH* 146). He drifts in and out of chapels as the neuter presents his conflict of being in turmoil. Images of the “burly black eyed priests” are juxtaposed with images of innocent believers following the Church (*SH* 146). The neuter notes that the scene typifies the problem of religion seen as the “farce of Irish Catholicism” (*SH* 146). There is a demand for truth that leaves its mark in Stephen’s perception of the Church that is directly held responsible for the “spiritual paralysis” he perceives in the fable of the meaningless afterlife of an imaginary “kingdom . . . not of this world” (*SH* 146). Stephen believes that life is here and now, and not in an imaginary afterlife, yet he feels that he is not fully equipped to be an artist and “take to heart the distress of the nation” (*SH* 146). As a result, he awakens to the fact that his being is called to respond to the ethic of injustice and enlighten subjects. Thus, he destroys his relation with the Church as he separates himself from the Christian belief, coinciding with his revolt that stems from negative thought as he deconstructs false images woven in lies.

Stephen’s separation from the Catholic Church develops into a critique of ethical morals in the wake of his newfound freedom—negativity, separation, reversal of positions and difference. Stephen tells Emma that his attitude towards the opposite sex is “liberal” now that he has no limits to seeing otherwise. Yet his experience with

⁵⁰⁸ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 123.

her demonstrates a conflict of opinion. His approach to questioning Emma about her practice at confession is received with utter contempt and disgust. This begins as he asks for love without commitment: "To hear your sins . . . To hear you murmur them into my ear and say you were sorry and would never commit them again and ask me to forgive you" (*SH* 154). Stephen usurps the priest's role as he subverts his role with the negative image: "I would forgive you and make you promise to commit them every time you liked and say 'God bless you, my dear child'" (*SH* 154). Here Stephen exposes the shame and guilt that is delivered to the Christian in the act of confession. Emma feels betrayed and embarrassed by the subject that removes the limits boldly. Indeed, he mocks the religious order by mimicking the priest's role, in contrast Emma is horrified: "O, for shame, Stephen. Such a way to talk of the sacraments!" (*SH* 154). The subject precedes to attacks Emma's blind faith through perversion, while she retains a sense of purity and innocence in the face of negative thought that questions.

Through the narrative of the neuter, Stephen's self-consciousness tries to locate a spiritual exchange between his being-in-itself and Emma's being-in-itself. He struggles to remember "almost every word she said", while he tries to bring back the dead and "recall any word which revealed the presence of a spiritual principle in her worthy of so significant a name of soul" (*SH* 156). His mind drifts onwards while moving backwards into the future. Time turns around as the image of his being refuses unity with her. He affirms, "he could not" (*SH* 156). Stephen is not able to locate a spiritual exchange in the images that break apart his negative thought. His mind then reflects back towards guilt as he fails to acknowledge the exchange. We are told: "the God of the Roman Catholics will put him into hell because he failed to understand that most marketable goodness . . . value of sacrament" (*SH* 156). However, the self-reflective portrait of redemption is dismissed as Stephen imagines a

wild and “mad night of love” with Emma (*SH* 158). He yearns for unity present in his desire to “cast his soul away, his life and his art, and to bury them all with her under fathoms of ‘lust-laden’ slumber” (*SH* 158). Dante’s poetic images culminate into the subject’s vision of hell. Here Stephen longs for an “outrageous instant” to be played out in the suffering he represses in his sexual desire for unity with the woman’s body

The problem of exchange in positions in relation to the other subject cannot be known. This fact resurfaces in Stephen’s exchange of words with Cranly. The subject argues that there is no word that defines the essential nature of “love”: “We are not likely to know whether it exists or not if no man tries to express it” (*SH* 175). The two men use the Bible to analyse the question of love: “[Jesus] The Church says the test of friendship is to see if a man will lay down his life for a friend (*SH* 175). The thought of death used in exchange for life is questioned as the final answer to the problem of the word: “Men die for two sticks put crosswise even in this modern age. What is a cross but two common sticks?” (*SH* 175) Stephen says that the word cannot be known. Indeed it is “inexpressible . . . but no, I won’t admit that . . . I believe it might be a test of love to see what exchanges it offers” (*SH* 175). He admits that it is impossible to know the real value of the thing that forms no unity. The conversation leads to the thought of an exchange present in desire and the word “hire” (*SH* 175). The exchange of words leads to limitless possibilities that replace desire. His mind then exchanges the two images of the female bodies with the image of the “stutish streets” as he meanders towards fecundity and infidelity. His dark gaze is lured toward temptation.

The feminine space of the mystical sirens relentlessly calls Stephen in order to captivate his imagination, just as he desires unity with Emma. A silent cry manifests itself as he longs “to take” Emma “in his arms” (*SH* 187). He imagines himself asking her if she would like to be fondled. The imagery of being fondled runs in accord with

the images of the coins being overturned in his pocket. He then feels an exchange take place as his desire for Emma gravitates to the image of the prostitute. Here, he starts “humming the chant of the passion” after he passes “coins to her hand” (*SH* 189). He compares his act of infidelity with the “exemplary figure of a bachelor” Jesus as he proceeds to re-evaluate positions bought back to everyday. The thought of infidelity is resurrected in Stephen’s conversation with Lynch as he harkens back to the lack of a union in the institution of marriage. His mind rolls out as the seductive power of the feminine force pulls him into an unknown space linked back to the image of Ireland. This happens just as he imagines being “marooned on an island in the ocean, through inheriting a will broken by doubt and a soul the steadfastness of whose hate became as weak as water in siren arms” (*SH* 194). The sirens lure him to the unknown “voice of a new humanity” that calls out from the exterior as he struggles to control affliction (*SH* 194). There is no doubt that his mind keeps overturning unequal, unjust relations.

The thought of infidelity is pushed to the extreme limit of experience for Stephen as he keeps testing the boundaries of separation and difference. In the clearest of terms, the subject evokes a hostile reaction from Emma as he declares that his unconditional desire for her body: “Just to live one night together, Emma, and then to say goodbye in the morning and never to see each other again! There is no such thing as love in the world” (*SH* 198). Stephen’s liberal confession evokes outrage from Emma: “You are mad, Stephen”. However, the subject refuses to submit to the shackles of Christian paganism and be tied down. Thus, he shatters the myth of love in unity as he refuses fidelity: “I am mad because I do not bargain with you or say I love you” (*SH* 198). Indeed, we witness Stephen’s awakening to the negativity of “the reverse” of a position as “the image struck him” as an “other” (*SH* 198). Here, Stephen imagines a fragmented image of him and Emma falling “forever”. But, the

union does not manifest between two shores. Instead, there is an insurmountable gulf of separation in difference at being dispersed and scattered in the broken images of the two shores. Essentially, he feels “her soul and his falling asunder swiftly and forever after an instant of all but union” (*SH* 189). This revelation marks a singular experience of the “all” that is shown in the being that is infinitely isolated in exodus.

Stephen’s passion of negative thought seeks to rip apart the man made institution of marriage, because he like Kafka sees nothing “sane about marriage” (*SH* 201).⁵⁰⁹ Here, Stephen argues that a man is a liar if he promises to enter an unjust agreement, “which is not in his power to do” (*SH* 201). Indeed, he destabilises the reality behind the myth that states a man must say that he “love(s) you forever’ to the adored object” (*SH* 201). So too, Kafka perceives marriage as an “incomprehensible injustice”.⁵¹⁰ Stephen justifies his refusal to submit to marriage by comparing fidelity to the space of separation in being before language, which forms a betrayal. He declares that he does not “swear to honour and obey the public” who end up buying his verses (*SH* 202). Furthermore, he argues that the “woman’s body is corporal asset of the state” (*SH* 202). Hence, he sees love as a free act and not “a spiritual asset” to be possessed. The subject separates the body from the spirit that the Church sees as united, just as he separates women into groups of difference of exchange; “harlots”, “married” or “celibate” as “love gives and freedom takes” (*SH* 202). He admits that he sees no such thing as union between two subjects, only exchange: “A human being can exert freedom to produce or to accept, or love to procreate or to satisfy” (*SH* 202).

Looking back, the subject’s relationship with his father is a parody of his own problematic relationship with the modern spirit. Stephen’s father sees his separation from the Church as a sign of his son being an “atheist” and he threatens to tell his

⁵⁰⁹ Blanchot, *The Space of Literature*, 76.

⁵¹⁰ Blanchot, *The Space of Literature*, 76.

“godfather” (*SH* 228). Mr Deadalus argues: “with the help of God I won’t be long till I let *him* know what a bloody nice atheist this fellow has turned out” (*SH* 228). It is ironic that the word “*him*” is italicised, because the godfather’s presence remains absent just like the “thing” in the art that Stephen cannot locate. Mr Deadalus recalls his revulsion at the image he sees in the son’s image at Isobel’s wake: “By Christ I was ashamed of you that morning” (*SH* 228). He scolds him for slinking and drinking in “the corner with the hearse drivers and mutes by God” (*SH* 229). He then apprehends him for drinking even though he too is a big drinker: “who taught you to drink pint of plain porter, might I ask?” (*SH* 228) It is also ironic that his father is angered by the images he sees of his son when he himself uses alcohol as a release from the grief and hardship of poverty: “By God, he’ll be hungry as well as thirsty one of these days . . . eating orange-peels and sleeping in the Park” (*SH* 217). The images of terror feed Stephen’s negative desire to create, as he faces the question of responding to the injustice of the real life standing before him in his father’s image.

While the neuter continuously follows Stephen, his negative gaze questions the foundation of the Catholic “Church” (*SH* 172). Indeed, he regards it as the source of his problem, which in turn reveals that Stephen’s journey has turned full circle. Once, again, it is the neuter that brings to light the fact that the reconstruction of a progressive social system emerges from a responsibility for all. However, this thought comes to him from the exteriority as it probes his mind, while he contemplates “teaching” others to “follow in humility the life of One” (*SH* 172). Indeed, Stephen faces the epic task of teaching responsibility as he rethinks an ethics of exchange in relations, whilst shifting the spiritual centre away from the Church and to the “all” in poetics. This belief comes forth in the wake of responsibility that lies before the artist.

This chapter examined the problem of being in relation to negative dialectics of alterity as Stephen was called into question from the voices in the exteriority of his home and community in language. Each encounter with each other subject manifested into conflict for Stephen as he refused all forms of unity, as he demanded a response from each relation. Signs of affliction erupted in the search for a practical poetics as he himself was put in question. It was the sound of poetry that seduced his being in the unknown space as he faced language as other. Here, his theoretical interpretation of art manifested into conflict of reason. His desire to return to the real images of the everyday man fuelled speculation that he was an immoral atheist, even though he tried to justify his position in contrast to a reversal of perspectives. However, the revolt and separation of his being-in-itself from the false idol Jesus Christ showed signs of a desire to return to a pre-Christian faith. His negative thought approached relations with the method of reversal of perspectives to justify ethical relations. Indeed, Stephen placed the word at the centre of his modern poetics fundamental to the Jewish ethic of negativity. He refused to accept Jesus as the son of God which revealed signs of Jewish belief in separation and difference. Stephen's quest for the real began and ended with a return to a poetics. Clearly, he refused all forms of unity in the relations negated in being. While there was no evidence to show that he adopted Jewish theology, his refusal of all relations presented a negative dialectical approach to being in light of Blanchot's theory on the limit-experience. The next chapter will examine the subject's search for an origin in "being" before the word in *Ulysses*, as Stephen begs to know "who signs in the name" of the dead author in "the return" of language.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Eternal Return for Stephen in *Ulysses*

“The experience of the eternal return entails a reversal of all these perspectives. The will that wills nothingness because the will that wills eternity—and in the process, eternity, without either will or end, returns to itself. Personal and subjective all powerfulness is transformed into the impersonal necessity of ‘being’. Transvaluation does not give us a new scale of values on the basis of negation of ever absolute value; it makes us attain an order to which the notion of value ceases”.⁵¹¹

This chapter will examine Stephen, the Nietzschean⁵¹² ultimate man that puts his being into question only to encounter an “eternal return” in *Ulysses*. Indeed, the subject’s “transvaluation” of being resembles Nietzsche’s critique of language, which underpins Blanchot’s reading of Bataille’s “inner experience” theorised in the “limit-experience”.⁵¹³ This experience begins with the problem of genesis as Stephen comes face to face with death. His mother’s death triggers his mourning for an origin, which leads to the question of God’s presence. As Stephen faces the corpse left behind in the dead mother’s name, he begins to mimic Hamlet’s encounter with the dead father’s ghost. From the outset Stephen faces a crisis as he refuses to form a unity with the ghost of the word that haunts him. This crisis stems from his negative dialectics that is perpetually put into play. Here, the subject presents a paradox in being as he faces the trauma of being before “absence” in the name that repetitiously haunts him. This problem leads to the final question of being as he asks: “What’s in a name?” (*U* 9.901)

⁵¹¹ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 149.

⁵¹² See Butler, “Joyce the Modernist”, in *The Cambridge Companion to Joyce*, pp. 67-68. Butler states that “thinkers like Nietzsche helped to sustain his (Joyce’s) opposition to those totalising religious and philosophical frameworks characteristic of the nineteenth-century bourgeoisie.” In addition, Butler quotes Joyce’s revolt: “My mind rejects the whole present social order and Christianity”.

⁵¹³ See Bataille, *Inner Experience*, p. 61. Bataille states: “Blanchot asked me: why not pursue my inner experience as if I were the last man . . . if I were the last man, the anguish would be the most insane imaginable! I could in no way escape; I would remain before infinite annihilation thrown back”. Later Blanchot responds to this text in “The Limit Experience” in *The Infinite Conversation*, pp. 202-211.

Negative dialectics leads to the fragmentation of being as Stephen searches for the dead author named Shakespeare. He then mimics the prophet Zarathustra as he searches for the dead author, only to find that “God is dead”.⁵¹⁴ The subject’s questioning via negative thought refuses to stop at a limit as he keeps overturning relations. As a result of being before negativity the corrosive force of language destroys the presence that it “erases” in the face of death. Ostensibly, we witness here in the clearest of terms, Stephen’s “affliction” of being akin to dying in an exegesis of a return, which ushers in a perpetual state of being in “negativity without employ”.⁵¹⁵ Stephen’s failure to find unity leads him into the pit of an “eternal return” back to death as he is unable to overcome the “absence” in language. He is haunted as another in the experience of alterity. Thus, the problem of being in relation to absence returns for the subject that hits a wall at the limit-experience where his being is bound to literature. This return brings him to the dead God with whom he struggles to know in language. This is the final limit: “The Father was Himself His Own Son” (*U* 9.863). While Heath argues that the “grossest and most common” way to read *Ulysses* derives from a “realist” reading, Blanchot’s writing on the “neuter” will frame the subject’s questioning the death of the “word” as he repeatedly searches for God in literature.

Heath states that: “One of the key stresses of Nietzsche’s work may be summarised by the following: ‘Because we have to be stable in our beliefs if we are to prosper, we have made the ‘real’ world a world not of change and becoming, but one of being’”.⁵¹⁶ He argues that Joyce shatters the stability of being fixed in the “perpetual displacement” of “multiplicity” that “lacks any centre”.⁵¹⁷ Indeed, the absence of any position unfolds in the movement of difference in the opening scene, as the image of

⁵¹⁴ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Portable Nietzsche*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (London: Penguin, 1976), p. 124.

⁵¹⁵ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 205.

⁵¹⁶ Heath, “Ambiviolences”, in *Post-Structuralist Joyce*, p. 39.

⁵¹⁷ Heath, “Ambiviolences”, in *Post-Structuralist Joyce*, p. 36.

the “mirror and a razor lay crossed” carried by Mulligan (*U* 1.2).⁵¹⁸ The image of the two objects juxtaposed with the mirror image signifies the presence of being crossing over in the displacement of the word. Blanchot’s ethic of being in relation to language stems from Hegel’s theory of self-consciousness. He claims that: “Consciousness has for its object one which, of its own self posits its otherness or difference as nothingness”.⁵¹⁹ Furthermore, the subject must supersede this otherness in being that is essentially “negative”. This dialectic shows that “doubling sets up opposition, and then again the negation of this indifference diversity and of its antithesis”.⁵²⁰ Blanchot maintains negation in theory that does not return to a synthesis, but remains an “absence of relation”.⁵²¹ “Language can only begin with the void: no fullness, no certainty can ever speak”.⁵²² As we shall see, Stephen maintains negative thought as he refuses all unity in his odyssey across language. The drama of being in negativity unfolds before Stephen’s being that is put into question by Mulligan, which is the first stage of the limit-experience at work: “Come up Kinch. Come up you fearful Jesuit” (*U* 1.8). Mulligan is the first to question the name of Stephen’s origin: “Your absurd name, an ancient name . . . The jejune Jesuit” (*U* 1.34-45). Here, the two subjects are juxtaposed with the image of crossing, as Stephen’s being remains concealed behind the “absurd” “ancient Greek name” and Malachi’s being is concealed behind the “Hebrew name” for “my messenger”.⁵²³ This act follows the Greek and Jew echoing each other in a style of negative dialectics Nadel notes in “the question and answer” form deployed to unite the “Jew Greek” crossing paths.⁵²⁴ Each subject stands in

⁵¹⁸ Heath, “Ambiviolences”, in *Post-Structuralist Joyce*, p. 37.

⁵¹⁹ Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, p. 110.

⁵²⁰ Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, p. 10.

⁵²¹ Blanchot, *The Work of Fire*, p. 322.

⁵²² Blanchot, *The Work of Fire*, p. 324.

⁵²³ Nadel, *Joyce and the Jews*, p. 2.

⁵²⁴ Nadel, *Joyce and the Jews*, p. 3.

relation to the “materiality” of the name that exists separate to the inner spirit of being in itself: “its condition is to be buried alive . . . it symbolizes: death that is life”.⁵²⁵

Using the play of Socratic dialectics, Stephen and Mulligan are the antithesis of each another. The images of the two beings speak in a double dialogue as they circle around the abstract question of being before a trial of death. The theme of death is linked to the problem of genesis and the question of language that Derrida perceives in the inauthentic, “supplement” to nature.⁵²⁶ Derrida argues that language is a “dangerous supplement” that operates as a power of “death”, which supplements the origin of being with an anterior presence. So too, Blanchot argues that the negation of being reveals the “torment of language is what it lacks . . . It cannot even name”.⁵²⁷ Similarly, the image of the razor in the background of the dialogue symbolises a crossing over effect in the negation of language that cuts across being that is named. Thus, the metaphor for the cutting of a space between the two subjects makes up a whole scene that is never complete as it always opens up to the dialectic of being in a negative movement. Mulligan tells Stephen that his aunt thinks that Stephen killed his mother. This cutting remark, “evokes a kind of violence” for the being engaged “in a separating movement” that ushers in past memories of trauma in loss. A crisis manifests itself for the memory remembering the dead mother “Pain, that was not yet the pain of love, fretted his heart” (*U* 1.102).⁵²⁸ Roughley identifies Stephen’s trauma with his “crisis with Catholicism”.⁵²⁹ It is apparent that the subject’s affliction harbours an exegesis in the inability to reconcile his separation from the Church and from his mother’s belief in Christ.⁵³⁰ This problem haunts him because “there is no

⁵²⁵ Blanchot, *The Work of Fire*, p. 84.

⁵²⁶ Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, pp. 141-57.

⁵²⁷ Blanchot, *The Work of Fire*, p. 327.

⁵²⁸ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 28.

⁵²⁹ Roughley, *Reading Derrida Reading Joyce*, p. 118.

⁵³⁰ Davidson, *James Joyce and the Construction of Jewish Identity*, p. 187.

substitute for a mother's love".⁵³¹ Stephen imagines his mother in a dream, which recalls the first home dissolved in "faint odour of wetted ashes" (*U* 1.105). The fresh image of the dead ashes returns to the crisis of locating the "possibility of a *dwelling place*".⁵³² Stephen is tormented by Mulligan's accusations: "he kills his mother but he can't wear grey trousers" (*U* 1.122). He then gazes into the mirror reflection, he begs to know the origin of the word as he faces the limit to being in life—death: "Who chose this face for me? This dogsbody to rid of vermin" (*U* 1.137). Here: "he questions himself, and he is also in question in the story—though almost effaced".⁵³³

The image of the mirror continues to flash in the background, which symbolises coinciding contraries of life in death. Blanchot argues that: "Death works with us in the world: it is the power that humanises".⁵³⁴ Correspondingly, the "cracked looking glass of a servant" presents an image of death in the movement of "effraction".⁵³⁵ Indeed, the being of "effraction" is supplemented by words that are crossed out in a movement of difference. This abstract act destroys the thing that is resurrected as a double in language. Blanchot adds that this "corrosive volatile element" of language in literature manifests itself in fragmentary writing.⁵³⁶ Similarly, the being that is "erased" or effaced as an "other" in language corresponds with Nietzsche's negative thought of seeing being as "indelible".⁵³⁷ Essentially, Blanchot follows Nietzsche's vision of language. He states: "language insists on playing its own game without man, who created it. Literature now dispenses with the writer".⁵³⁸ This argument stems from the belief that being as such is crossed out in "self-

⁵³¹ Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, p. 146.

⁵³² Blanchot, *The Space of Literature*, p. 259.

⁵³³ Blanchot, *The Work of Fire*, p. 21.

⁵³⁴ Blanchot, *The Work of Fire*, p. 337.

⁵³⁵ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 151.

⁵³⁶ Blanchot, *The Work of Fire*, p. 302.

⁵³⁷ Blanchot, *The Work of Fire*, p. 309.

⁵³⁸ Blanchot, *The Work of Fire*, p. 328.

contradiction” presented in two relations “opposed” with another “point”, which leads to the power of “contestation”.⁵³⁹ Thus, the separating movement of being crossed out opens presence. Indeed, Mulligan’s opens up the question of being: “What is death, he asked, your mother’s or yours or my own? (*U* 1.204) However, Stephen’s motive for denying his dying mother’s request to pray before God is refused, as the subject shields the pain that causes him extreme affliction. This is exemplified in the trace of absence, he notes in the space of language that fails to supplement the trauma left behind in “the gaping wounds which the words left” (*U* 1.217). While both men view the dead, maternal, Irish, sea from different perspectives, Mulligan tells Stephen to take an objective view of death: “look at the sea. What does it care about offences? . . . Give up the moody brooding (*U* 1.231-36). What is at stake in Stephen’s refusal to pray is the subject’s failure to find solace in the image of Ireland that represents a loss. As a result, he mourns the loss of an origin that is compared to the mirror image of “white breast of the dim sea” reflected in the “mirror of water . . . twining stresses, two by two . . . wavewhile wedded words shimmering on the dim tide” (*U* 1.244-47).⁵⁴⁰ His dark gaze “digs tirelessly” turning in the space of death that is negativity itself: “nullifying what encloses it—it is infinite disquiet, formless and nameless”.⁵⁴¹

Clearly, Stephen’s presence is afflicted by the image of his dead mother that haunts him as a ghost. His grief of separation leads to a dream scene that resembles the tragic hero Hamlet’s encounter with his own dead father’s ghost: “In a dream, silently, she had come to him . . . her breath bent over him with mute secret words . . . her glazing eyes, staring out of death, to shake and bend my soul. On me alone” (*U* 1.270-74). The mother is depicted as a ghoulish demon resurrected in the “tortured face” that he relives in the trauma of others praying before his dying mother who

⁵³⁹ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 140.

⁵⁴⁰ Eide, *Ethical Joyce*, p. 80.

⁵⁴¹ Blanchot, *The Work of Fire*, p. 326.

harbours a secret, which remains unspoken. He recalls the silence enclosed in the “hoarse loud breath” that rattles “in horror” while he himself stands still (*U* 1.275). The corpse does not speak to him, but stalks him with an absence that resembles a horrific double in the self-consciousness that turns back to face death. Indeed, his mind struggles with the ghost as he begins to uproot the lost origin, only to be displaced and nullified by the womb that repetitiously turns back as another dead corpse, to haunt him. He feels his mother’s dark gaze repress him, as he struggles to shake off the monstrous dead image associated with the torment of self-exile: “Ghoul! Chewer of corpses! No mother! Let me be and let me live” (*U* 1.278-79). The power of the dead name leaves a terrifying impression on the subject that is not able to shake off the affliction of awakening to the religious decision, to separate himself from the shackles of Catholicism and the Church. Here, the power of death stigmatises the subject that faces the dark, cadaverous reality of waking up to the ethical decision of Abraham, to separate his being from “what is” language.⁵⁴² This ethical decision is at the centre of Stephen’s problem, which causes affliction due to indecision. Blanchot notes that “the Jew is the man of origins; he who relates to the origin not by dwelling but by distancing himself from it . . . in separation”.⁵⁴³ Indeed, his mother calls him a chewer of corpses, which cuts a striking self-reflective portrait of the being that faces a memorial of an origin. He faces negativity in being before the word as a coffin, just as Blanchot sees words as corpses of things dead, and Mallarmé sees the book as a tomb:⁵⁴⁴ “When we speak, we are leaning on a tomb and the void of that tomb is what makes language true, but at the same time void is reality and death becomes being”.⁵⁴⁵

⁵⁴² Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 126.

⁵⁴³ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 126.

⁵⁴⁴ See Blanchot, “Mallarmé’s Experience” in *The Space of Literature*, p. 38-49.

⁵⁴⁵ Blanchot, *The Work of Fire*, p. 336.

Haines calls Stephen into question as he demands a response to the final question of being in life, being before death, thus being before God: “You’re not a believer, are you? . . . I mean a believer in the narrow sense of the word. Creation from nothing and miracles and a personal God” (*U* 1.611-13). Stephen faces Haines with an elusive response to an impossible question that lies at the heart of being at the limit-experience: “There’s only one sense of the word, it seems to me” (*U* 1.614). The nature of language is the limit to the knowledge of being that is put on trial in the word, now traced back to the question of God’s absent presence: “Either you believe or you don’t, isn’t it? Personally I couldn’t stomach that idea of a personal God” (*U* 1.623). Following this negative response, the narrator doped in the secret cloak of the mysterious neuter interrupts the dialogue as if to prompt “the characters” and also “the events with what they have to say”.⁵⁴⁶ Stephen then responds with a twofold answer to the question, which he retraces back in time: “I am the servant of two masters . . . English and an Italian” (*U* 1.638). The imperial British state and the Roman Catholic Church rule his being that is divided. He fervently refuses to believe in either institution, or be indoctrinated by a faith that cannot be justified. As such, Stephen traces his heritage back to the Jewish race as he harks towards a Hellenic return to pre Christianity. It is evident that the subject identifies with the displaced Jewish race that is nomadic, just as the Irish are other to the British, as he searches for an origin related to the problem of being estranged. He skirts around the question of God as he blames the British and the Roman order for Ireland’s subservient position. Meanwhile, Mulligan alludes to being before negative thought as he compares Stephen and himself to the Nietzschean Übermensch: “I’m the *Übermensch*. Toothless Kinch and I, the supermen” (*U* 1.708-09). Without a doubt, Stephen like Nietzsche

⁵⁴⁶ Blanchot, “The Narrative Voice”, in *The Station Hill Blanchot Reader*, p. 460.

searches for a new origin in the “text as fragment”.⁵⁴⁷ The text stands as the ethical decision to separate the self from the other, which is central to negative thought. So too, Derrida sees this ethical decision as problematic for being in language shows a revolt in being other, where “the crisis in which reason is madder than madness”.⁵⁴⁸

The representation of Stephen’s being before the “death of God” is a parody of Zarathustra’s call for the *Übermensch* or Overman. Zarathustra states that: “Man is something that shall be overcome”.⁵⁴⁹ This prophecy attests to the affirmation of being separated in the text, when confronted with the “absence” of an origin. In fact, the name *Über* signifies “‘over’ in the sense of height and transformation . . . ‘across’ or ‘beyond’”.⁵⁵⁰ The thought of being a “moving tear of time”⁵⁵¹ is exemplified in the being “between-two” which characterises the subject “who crosses over” as “rope over an abyss”.⁵⁵² Correspondingly, Nietzsche argues that “one is wrong” and all “truth begins in two”.⁵⁵³ Being-in-itself is separated between the spirit and the material text. Hence, Nietzsche’s poetic aim is to show that through the image of the crossing over, the ultimate man goes beyond unity, in the negative thought of being the “spirit is the life that cuts into life . . . with the cruelty of its hammer”.⁵⁵⁴ He states that being begins with separation: “knowledge this tearing apart: the breaking up of Dionysus”.⁵⁵⁵ As a means of justifying existence he calls for “reversing perspectives: the first reason why it is perhaps for me alone that a ‘revaluation of values’ is at all possible today”.⁵⁵⁶ So too, Stephen adopts the reversal of perspectives as he tries to

⁵⁴⁷ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 141.

⁵⁴⁸ Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, p. 62.

⁵⁴⁹ Nietzsche, *The Portable Nietzsche*, p. 124.

⁵⁵⁰ Lee Spinks, *Friedrich Nietzsche*, p. 120.

⁵⁵¹ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 158.

⁵⁵² Nietzsche *The Portable Nietzsche Reader*, p. 126.

⁵⁵³ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 154.

⁵⁵⁴ Nietzsche, *The Portable Nietzsche*, p. 216.

⁵⁵⁵ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 157.

⁵⁵⁶ Nietzsche, *The Portable Nietzsche*, p. 659.

justify the problem of being as he faces “being . . . an empty fiction”.⁵⁵⁷ The subject’s dialectic of negativity runs head on with Blanchot reading of Nietzsche’s characterisation of the Jewish being that is bound to the book of the Torah, which “founds the human right”.⁵⁵⁸ The Jewish being is bound to the word and depicted as being in exile from all relations. So too, Nietzsche sees truth in Jewish negativity: “do you know what ‘the world’ is to me? Shall I show it to you in my mirror?”⁵⁵⁹ Here the mirror image of being results in a double refusal in the “world: the infinite of interpreting”.⁵⁶⁰ Being is presented in the doubled always “crossing over” into the negativity of language: “The world? A text? The world refers text back to text, as text refers the world back to affirmation of the world. The text certainly a metaphor”.⁵⁶¹ Being is becoming difference in negation that separates man, whom is ironically destroyed in the “exegesis of rupture that constantly turns him away from what is in his *power* to think”.⁵⁶² This dialectic of negativity shows that language implies a metaphysic in the reversal of positions, whereby being separated from the inner self presents a likeness to “a phantom wandering in a space where nothing happens”.⁵⁶³

In “Scylla and Charybdis”, we witness Stephen’s encounter with the being in relation to the existence without being. This exigency begins with the question of art that resounds in the theory that “art has to reveal to us ideas, formless spiritual essences: “The supreme question about a work of art is out of how deep a life it springs?” (U 9.48-50) Ironically, Blanchot argues: “Art is intimately associated with the origin, which is itself always bought back to the non-origin; art explores, asserts, gives rise to—through a contact that shatters all acquired form—what is essentially

⁵⁵⁷ Nietzsche, *The Portable Nietzsche*, p. 481.

⁵⁵⁸ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 126.

⁵⁵⁹ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 163.

⁵⁶⁰ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 164.

⁵⁶¹ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 167.

⁵⁶² Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 151.

⁵⁶³ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 172.

before; what is, without yet being”.⁵⁶⁴ Indeed, the measure of distance between the form and the thing becomes infinite as Stephen points out for being in relation to literature: “the deepest poetry of Shelley, the words of Hamlet . . . Plato’s world of ideas” (*U* 9.51-53). The subject that puts his being into question in relation to literature reveals a search for an origin that repetitiously returns back to the question of nothing. Ostensibly, the “real absence” of negativity in language comes from the negative that always comes second: “We see, then we imagine. After the object comes the image. ‘After’ . . . Here distance is in the heart of the thing”.⁵⁶⁵ Hill states that the object that follows the question of being in the work “leaves something unsaid”.⁵⁶⁶ Indeed, the dissolution of the thing into the unreal establishes the duplicity of being a secondary copy to life in the negative. Essentially, it is impossible to trace birth back to a centre if there is no origin: “Questioning places us in relation with what evades every question and exceeds all power of questioning”.⁵⁶⁷ Thus, the question of an origin is tied to an inaccessible and “unknown” word that is the final limit. Blanchot claims that: “literature beings at the moment when literature becomes a question”.⁵⁶⁸ Here, the “compromising equilibrium” of the “suppliant” a term used for a Greek hero “Ulysses” can be compared to Stephen, the man that asks the question of origin in the “region of separation” itself.⁵⁶⁹ Like the suppliant, the subject probes God’s invisibility in the word traced back to God: “Formless spiritual. Father, Word and Holy Breath” (*U* 9.61). The suppliant’s “search for measure” affirms Gods’ absence

⁵⁶⁴ Blanchot, *Friendship*, p. 10.

⁵⁶⁵ Blanchot, *The Space of Literature*, p. 255.

⁵⁶⁶ Hill, *Radical Indecision*, p. 170.

⁵⁶⁷ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 21,

⁵⁶⁸ Blanchot, *The Work of Fire*, p. 300.

⁵⁶⁹ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 93.

that “renders manifest”.⁵⁷⁰ As such: “His moves are religious because in himself he belongs to a region of separation . . . the presence of the God in his invisibility”.⁵⁷¹

The thought of an absent God manifest itself in Stephen’s negative thought as he examines *Hamlet* as a ghost story. Here the subject begs to know the final question to “who” signs: “What is a ghost . . . who has faded into impalpability through death, though absence” (*U* 9.147-48). The word in question is interrogated as a response to being: “The word is the absence of that being, its nothingness, what is left when it has lost being”.⁵⁷² The question of authenticity is asked for a second time, as the “redoubling constitutes” repetition in the “non-origin”.⁵⁷³ “Who is the ghost . . . returning to the world that has forgotten him? Who is king Hamlet?” (*U* 9.150-51) Stephen strips back the title, foreseeing Roland Barthes theory of “Death of the Author”.⁵⁷⁴ Evidently, Barthes criticism “influenced and was influenced by Blanchot”.⁵⁷⁵ Barthes claims: “it is language which speaks, not the author”.⁵⁷⁶ If so, who is the speaking? This is the question Stephen begs to know in his insane effort to question the dead author, while his being is “deprived of a centre that does not begin, does not end”.⁵⁷⁷ Here, the relic of the “deceased, it is said here, is no longer of this world: he has left it behind . . . this cadaver, which is not of the world either”.⁵⁷⁸ Indeed, Stephen draws attention to the fact that the text stands separate from the name crossed as a negative. He resembles a ghost that keeps returning in the voice speaking, but without a subject and hidden in the language called into question. This thought

⁵⁷⁰ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 93.

⁵⁷¹ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 95.

⁵⁷² Blanchot, *The Work of Fire*, p. 322.

⁵⁷³ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 249.

⁵⁷⁴ Roland Barthes, *Image/ Music/ Text*, trans. Stephen Heath (New York: Hilland Wang, 1977), pp. 142-48.

⁵⁷⁵ Haase and Large, *Maurice Blanchot*, p. 62.

⁵⁷⁶ Barthes, *Image/Music/Text*, p. 142.

⁵⁷⁷ Maurice Blanchot, *The Book to Come*, trans. trans. Charlotte Mandell. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), p. 210.

⁵⁷⁸ Blanchot, *The Space of Literature*, p. 257.

runs in accord with Blanchot's theory of "dying the impossible death of the other" as language is compared to a murderous act, which is similar to a "deferred assassination" for being.⁵⁷⁹ The subject is killed by the word and being is resurrected like Lazarus as "death speaks".⁵⁸⁰ Strikingly, he adds: "Of course my language does not kill anyone", but when he names a word for example presence is "plunged into nothingness".⁵⁸¹ Here, the "trace of presence" has "disappeared" into the "erasure" of "death" at the limit.⁵⁸² The text stands alone as it calls the reader to respond, but the identity of the author presents itself as an unknown: empty, mute, stone, devoid of content. Derrida also notes that death is the final limit: "death as the possibility of the impossible as such, is a figure of the *aporia* in which 'death' and death can replace—and this is a metonymy that carries the name beyond the name and beyond" being.⁵⁸³

The story of *Hamlet* retold by Stephen is a ruin that unfolds in the redoubling of repetition of frames that depict duplicity in being otherness: "The play begins. A player comes on under the shadow" (*U* 9.164). The story is erased by another copy of being ruptured, as the reader is removed from the real and situated at a limit to being negative in the double that is language: "It is the ghost, the king, a king and no king, and the player is Shakespeare who has studied Hamlet all the years of his life" (*U* 9.165-67). The story recalls God's call to Adam, the Oedipal drama, whereby the son is called into question to answer for being present and the other absent, or dead before literature: "*Hamlet, I am thy father's spirit*, bidding him list. To a son he speaks, the son of his soul, the prince, young Hamlet and to the son of his body, Hamnet Shakespeare, who has died in Stratford that his namesake may live forever" (*U* 9.170-73). Blanchot argues that Oedipus "will pull out his eyes in an attempt to reconcile

⁵⁷⁹ Blanchot, *The Work of Fire*, p. 323.

⁵⁸⁰ Blanchot, *The Work of Fire*, p. 323.

⁵⁸¹ Blanchot, *The Work of Fire*, p. 323.

⁵⁸² Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 202.

⁵⁸³ Derrida, *Aporias*, pp. 78-79

clarity and obscurity . . . the visible and the non-visible, the two opposing regions of the question”.⁵⁸⁴ Stephen sees clarity in the darkness of negativity: “By turning itself into an inability to reveal anything, literature is attempting to become the revelation of what revelation destroys”.⁵⁸⁵ So too, the desire to know the real text sublimated in Hamlet is blinding for the critics that retrace presence back to the author’s biography.⁵⁸⁶ The subject’s are granted the gift to hear, but not see the unknown “Voice” as Holland notes: “‘God’ perhaps privileges writing, revealing himself as the first and last writer”.⁵⁸⁷ Here, the critic’s desire for unity with the origin is enacted in the retracing presence back to the author’s life that is examined as a “possibility of impossibility” to “being in relation with the Unknown”.⁵⁸⁸ Stephen begs to know who signs behind death as “speech crosses an abyss”: “Is it possible that that player Shakespeare, a ghost by absence and in the vesture of buried Denmark, a ghost by death, speaking his own words to his own son’s name” (*U* 9.174-76). The search for the sacred immediate “moment that precedes literature” dissolves in the treachery of being in relation to literature: “How can I recover it, how can I turn around and look at what exists *before*, if all my power consists of making it into what exists *after*”.⁵⁸⁹

The text that stands in as a fragment of being before the dead author is destroyed in the language of “literature that is built upon its own ruins”.⁵⁹⁰ Indeed, Nadel argues that “Moses destruction of the first set of tables” is aligned with the substitution of false idols with a “new set of commandments”.⁵⁹¹ Accordingly, Nietzsche’s poetics set out to smash with heavy hammer false idols as he pulls apart

⁵⁸⁴ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 18.

⁵⁸⁵ Blanchot, *The Work of Fire*, p. 328.

⁵⁸⁶ Terrence Killeen, *Ulysses Unbound* (Dublin: Wordwell, 2005), p. 90.

⁵⁸⁷ Holland, *The Blanchot Reader*, p. 317.

⁵⁸⁸ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 126.

⁵⁸⁹ Blanchot, *The Work of Fire*, p. 327.

⁵⁹⁰ Blanchot, *The Work of Fire*, p. 301.

⁵⁹¹ Nadel, *Joyce and the Jews*, p. 89.

texts as a means to justifying his poetic theory of “revaluation of values”.⁵⁹² This theory is at work in his parable on the “death of God” that can be used to shed light on Stephen’s theory of being before the dead author. Zarathustra screams out: “I seek God! I seek God! . . . Why is he lost? Said one. Or does he keep himself hidden? . . . We have killed him—you and I . . . God is dead! God remains dead!”⁵⁹³ So too, Stephen suggests that the dead ghost of Hamlet’s father is akin to the dead God that hides in the “creation from nothing”.⁵⁹⁴ The problem of the name is diffused and displaced into the everyday text as a means of re-evaluating the problem of authorship.⁵⁹⁵ This act unfolds in a reversal of perspectives: “I want to know, or probable that he did not draw or foresee the logical conclusion . . . you are the dispossessed son. I am the murdered father: your mother is the guilty queen. Ann Shakespeare, born Hathaway? (U 9.177-80) Destroying the text in order to measure perspective is envisaged in the “infinite movement that relates to nothing but to itself”.⁵⁹⁶ Ironically, this inquiry reverts to avid skepticism, as the critical theorists dismiss, “this prying into the family life of a great man . . . what is it to use how the poet lived?” (U 9.181-85) Thus, the questioning reveals that, “Literature says, ‘I no longer represent, I am; I do not signify, I present’”.⁵⁹⁷ This haunting aspect of language that speaks from nowhere is identified by Hill as an “alterity” that lies beyond ontology, which stems from a “discursive strategy” in a movement of “withdrawal and re-inscription”.⁵⁹⁸ What is implied here in this text is the sacred itself that affirms “language is of a divine nature, not because it renders eternal by naming, but

⁵⁹² Nietzsche, *The Portable Nietzsche*, p. 659.

⁵⁹³ Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, p. 41.

⁵⁹⁴ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 140.

⁵⁹⁵ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 210.

⁵⁹⁶ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 165.

⁵⁹⁷ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 328.

⁵⁹⁸ Hill, *Blanchot: Extreme Contemporary*, p. 133.

because . . . (it is) saying of course only what is not, but speaking precisely in the name of this nothingness that dissolves all things, it becoming speech of death”.⁵⁹⁹

Stephen’s re-reading of the play *Hamlet* reveals further signs of the limit-experience at work in the sacred emphasis of interpretation. This is marked in his breaking or “displacement of language rupturing its original writing and exiling the word”.⁶⁰⁰ Nadel argues that the Jew regards the text as being the primary relation to being itself: “for the Jew—and Joyce—signification is inseparable from the text meaning within the boundaries of the text and not the discovery of the mind of the author”.⁶⁰¹ Correspondingly, for the Jew, the text is the sacred space of “rest and recovery” where the subject returns to the primary question of an origin that is hidden beneath the letters of the word.⁶⁰² So too, in the Jewish religious tradition, Blanchot notes that the “secret name of God is the object of special reverence and can even, through the contemplation and combination of letters, ecstatically engage us in the divine mystery”.⁶⁰³ Thus, the spoken word recovers the mark of absence in language of separation from the text, written by an unknown author. It is important to note that the Jew is prohibited from worshipping “nature, and its correlative, the making of ‘graven images’” that affirms being separated from all “forms of god-belief”.⁶⁰⁴ Here, the preoccupation with the dead author’s absence corresponds with Stephen’s thought of being separated by language as if deserted in a desert. Blanchot argues: “The desert makes of the slaves of Egypt a people, but a people without a land and bound by a word. Later the exodus becomes an exile . . . an incomprehensible malediction”.⁶⁰⁵ For the Jew, the desert is the place of exodus, where language is the negation of

⁵⁹⁹ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 35.

⁶⁰⁰ Nadel, *Joyce and the Jews*, p. 90.

⁶⁰¹ Nadel, *Joyce and the Jews*, p. 7.

⁶⁰² Nadel, *Joyce and the Jews*, p. 9.

⁶⁰³ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 110.

⁶⁰⁴ Epstein, *Judaism*, p. 21.

⁶⁰⁵ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 125.

possibility, “registered in the form of the text”.⁶⁰⁶ Thus, the retelling of the script by Stephen is an act of estrangement that uncovers language in a return back to the limit. As such, he dwells in crossing, “‘the word is the promised land where exile establishes a dwelling’ writes Maurice Blanchot”.⁶⁰⁷ Ironically, the neuter proceeds to insert fragments of signs in the form of dispersion, as being breaks apart in the exodus: “I am other. I now . . . But I, entelechy, form of forms, am I by memory because under everchanging forms . . . I, I and I. I. A. E. I. O. U” (*U* 9.205-213). Like a ghost, being is then ripped apart and exiled in the text that is symbolic of “this desert”.⁶⁰⁸

In search of an authentic origin, Stephen redirects the question of “who” signs in the text of *Hamlet* back to the question of Shakespeare’s wife named Ann Hathaway: “She bore his children and she laid pennies on his eyes to keep his eyelids closed when he lay on his deathbed” (*U* 9.218-220). Ironically, the neuter interrupts the question of fecundity with a return back to the dead womb of the dead mother’s ghost: “Mother’s deathbed. Candle. The sheeted mirror. Who bought me into this world lies there” (*U* 9.221-22). Here we can take note that the “who” remains unknown, lying beyond the limit to knowledge and linked to the sheet of the “letter” as Derrida points out in the text: “being separated from it only by the ‘transparent sheet’ of which Joyce speaks, that is, by itself”.⁶⁰⁹ There is an allusion to the fact that Ann was the cause of an unknown “error” that gives birth to presence: “By cock, she was to blame” (*U* 9.257). While the question of language appears to be a void of absence, Nietzsche maintains that “the creator must want to be the mother that gives birth”.⁶¹⁰ Indeed, it is the Overman that overcomes the nothingness in being in the will to create in the face of death. The search for an answer to the puzzle of who signs in

⁶⁰⁶ Nadel, *Joyce and the Jews*, p. 16.

⁶⁰⁷ Nadel, *Joyce and the Jews*, p. 17.

⁶⁰⁸ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 199.

⁶⁰⁹ Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, p. 55.

⁶¹⁰ Nietzsche, *The Portable Nietzsche*, p. 199.

the name that creates being turns to the problem of infidelity and deception, as the fragmented images gravitate towards a search for a home that is linked back to the mother's dead presence, "from his mother how to bring thoughts into the world" (*U* 9.235-36). However, the myth of creation remains a mystery in the series of riddles that give birth to presence: "Yogibogeybox in Dawson chambers . . . Gulfer of souls, engulfer. Hesouls, shesouls, shoals of souls . . . *For years in this fleshcase a shesoul dwell*" (*U* 9.279-88). It must be absolutely clear that Stephen questioning the feminine origin in his search for unity is directly linked to the creative exegesis that gives birth to the home of the text. However, the failure to get an answer to his question of the sacred word's origin, leads us to the image of the mother being ripped apart and destroyed into a mesh of fragments that return back to haunt the subject. The image of Anne that began as the centre of gravity is now seen in a myriad of broken symbols in of destruction and "devastation . . . reconfirmed within the dispersion of limits".⁶¹¹

The neuter continues to call Stephen into question, as the subject "ponders things that were not" (*U* 9.348). The dialectics of negativity is put into practice in the thought of "limitless limits" that lead to possibilities of being in relation to death, "possibilities of the possible as possible: things not known" (*U* 9349-.350). Here, the words fracture the dimension of being in question to infinity, because there is no end to death. As such, the neuter envisages a haunting maternal presence that surrounds Stephen's being as he faces the materiality of words that embody him as a synthetic construct:⁶¹² "Coffined thoughts around me, in mummycases, embalmed in spice of words. Thoth, god of libraries" (*U* 9.352-53). Surprisingly, Blanchot argues that: "My hope lies in the materiality of language, in the fact that words are things . . . in the trail

⁶¹¹ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 159.

⁶¹² See Kollias, "A Matter of Life and Death", in *After Blanchot*, p. 134.

of ink, the book”.⁶¹³ Language is a paradox as it embodies two thoughts at the limit, in life and death, in presence and absence, while it “hides it does not give itself away”, just like the father “Thoth”, the father of the word.⁶¹⁴ Inclusive circularity arises here as being comes face to face with the presence of a “bogus corpse”. Moreover, the physical separation of the body from the mother at birth returns to the subject’s search for an origin in the question.⁶¹⁵ Essentially, Stephen’s obsession with the lack of an origin in the space of the question harbors an excess that cannot be justified, because each time the word is destroyed being returns. Hence, the problem of who signs in Shakespeare’s name culminates into Stephen’s belief that the author hides behind the empty reversal of positions, thus, “Shakespeare is Hamlet” (*U* 9.370-71). From this perspective, the speech of negativity creates being: “As we, or mother Dana, weave and unweave out bodies . . . from day to day, their molecules shuttled to and fro, so does the artist weave and unweave his image” (*U* 9.376-378). Echoing Nietzsche, Stephen alludes to the fact that each character that stands under the name Shakespeare is a fragment that cannot be pinned down in language. Thus, Shakespeare is the “unquiet father” and also the child “the image of the un living son”, all in one (*U* 9.380-81). The centre of the word “is not to be found” in the return that effaces being seen in the reversal of positions, which shows an infinite exchange of dispositions.⁶¹⁶

This development brings us to the fact that the neuter recognises the self in the face of the other subject “dying” in the reversal of positions. Here the self does not die but becomes other: “He is in my father. I am in his son” (*U* 9.390). While “language does not kill anyone”, Blanchot argues that the notion of “dying” emerges for the being under the erasure of negative thought. Another example would be to see

⁶¹³ Blanchot, *The Work of Fire*, p. 329.

⁶¹⁴ Blanchot, *The Work of Fire*, p. 329.

⁶¹⁵ Eide, *Ethical Joyce*, p. 82.

⁶¹⁶ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 26.

language as an act of a murderous “deferred assassination”.⁶¹⁷ Thus, while the image of the father and son can be seen in the reversal of positions, both positions attest to a withdrawal in being that usurps presence. Here we see that in thinking being as negativity the name that affirms the trace of presence at the limit cuts in between the two subjects standing in relation. There is a sheet of distance between the two in relation to the whole and that is language, which “defers, as it were, from differing, and in this redoubling that withdraws”.⁶¹⁸ This fact is reiterated in the process of becoming as two parts cross over and separate: “The spirit of reconciliation, the quaker librarian breathed. There can be no reconciliation, Stephen said, if there has not been a sundering” (*U* 9.396-98). This Hegelian remark is repeated twice which indicates the significance of being in relation to difference, as being is separated. Here being is re-interpreted as new but without a past and without a future. Thus, there is no reconciliation. Instead, being resembles Nietzsche’s vision: “Man is a rope . . . a rope over an abyss”.⁶¹⁹ Being is essentially constructed in the process of being broken apart in the re-beginning, which has no origin. Accordingly, Blanchot states that “fragmentation is this God himself, that which has no relation whatsoever with a centre and cannot be referred to an origin”.⁶²⁰ Thus, the problem of being-in-itself returns back again to the presence of the maternal in the “woman’s invisible weapon” (*U* 9.461). There is a link between the feminine presence and the creative space of destruction that emerges in the thought of erasure, which feeds into the unknown: “I feel in the words, some goad of the flesh driving him into a new passion, a darker shadow of the first, darkening even his own understanding of himself” (*U* 9.461-64). The thought of being before death in the word gives birth to the mystery of recreation.

⁶¹⁷ Blanchot, *The Work of Fire*, p. 323.

⁶¹⁸ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 161.

⁶¹⁹ Nietzsche, *The Portable Nietzsche*, p. 126.

⁶²⁰ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 157.

What is at stake in Stephen's being that faces the neuter is the possibility of awakening to the secret presence of literature. It is clear that Stephen is awakening to the limits of negative thought: "The soul has been before stricken mortally, a poison poured in the porch of a sleeping ear" (*U* 9.466-67). Stephen's thought continues to question Hamlet's image that prompts a "response" to the call of being compelled to judge death, "those who are done to death in sleep cannot know the manner of their quell unless their Creator endow their souls with that knowledge in the life to come" (*U* 9.467-69). The subject's presence is examined in light of death and creation, as the imagery alludes to an awakening after knowledge has been experienced as death. Here, Levinas argues that "awakening" to the limit is essentially the "Other" (God) calling him as a "demand": "In awakening, between the Same and the Other there is shown a relationship irreducible to adversity and conciliation, alienation and assimilation".⁶²¹ As such a problem emerges in Stephen's questioning, "the poisoning and the beast with two backs that urged it king Hamlet's ghost could not know of were he not endowed with knowledge by his creator" (*U* 9.469-71). An irreducible relation presents as "speech is always turned elsewhere, backward" just like the man who questions like a crab searching backwards (*U* 9.472). This statement supports the Jewish belief that the gift or "breath" of life is hidden in the "letter" linked back to God's hidden name. Judaism proclaims that God manifests himself in immediate "speech".⁶²² Indeed, the subject points out that "loss is his gain" in the separation of being from the absent God, because being is limitless, passing in exodus "on towards eternity in undiminished personality, untaught by the wisdom he has written or by the laws he has revealed" (*U* 9.476-77). Stephen is awakening to the paradox of being: "His beaver is up. He is a ghost, a shadow now, the wind by Elsinore's rocks or what

⁶²¹ Emmanuel Levinas, *Of God Who Comes to Mind*, trans. Bettina Bergo (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), p. 24.

⁶²² Nadel, *Joyce and the Jews*, p. 6.

you will, the sea's voice, a voice heard only in the heart of him who is the substance of his shadow, the son consubstantial with the father" (*U* 9.478-481). The neuter questions the subject that faces literature: "hast thou found me. O mine enemy?" (*U* 9.483) As a result, he watches silently from behind a dark curtain just as, the hidden God continues to torment thought that awakes to being in relation to absence itself.

The problem of being in relation to language stems from the fact that "creation is unjustifiable. Its only justification is that it leaves us the possibility of destroying it by renouncing it".⁶²³ Similarly, Stephen fails to find an origin in paternity linked back to the problem of creation: "A father, Stephen said, battling against hopelessness, is a necessary evil. He wrote the play in the months that followed his father's death" (*U* 9.828-29). Ironically, Stephen's thought returns to his mother's death in hope of an answer to his own origin in being that is inextricably linked to the dead father: "Fatherhood, in the sense of conscious begetting, is unknown to man. It is a mystical estate, an apostolic succession, from only begetter to only begotten" (*U* 9.836-39). The problematic nature of creation that is born from the double edged sword that is nothing remains in the space of the text, as Stephen is stuck in the desert, literally, deserted by his God. Here, Stephen faces "a God whose one face is being, the other nothingness—and moves to a God with whom relations are spiritual".⁶²⁴ Each time Stephen questions the name of the dead author, he confronts another question which leads to "infinite separation".⁶²⁵ Hill states that the "limitless limits" operates as a response to the fragmented notion of being in alterity: "The limitlessness is itself inherent in the limit".⁶²⁶ Hence, Stephen finds unity in disunity as he embraces his exodus in the text that is similar to the Jewish being in infinite exile. He claims that:

⁶²³ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 118.

⁶²⁴ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 104.

⁶²⁵ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 104.

⁶²⁶ Hill, *Blanchot: Extreme Contemporary*, p. 94.

“On that mystery and not on the madonna which the cunning Italian intellect flung to the mob of Europe the church is founded and founded irremovably because founded, like the world . . . upon the void” (*U* 9.839-42). Thus, while the thought of the death of God leaves a space for man, in the thought of the “Ultimate man” the question of being returns back to language. Blanchot states that the artist’s “panoramic reconstruction” of the “whole” marks the trace in “the artist or the poet be the creator . . . To take over from the myths of God”.⁶²⁷ Furthermore, he argues that “creation belongs to the old theology . . . the place of his summit”. Creation is both life and death linked to Nietzsche’s “face of the destroyer”.⁶²⁸ Here, death is the beginning of life for the mind present in the gift of the name that de-creates being.⁶²⁹

A crisis presents itself in Stephen’s negative thought before the dead father, as he falls into the limitlessness pit of being in death: “if the father who has not a son be not a father can the son who has not a father be a son?” (*U* 9.864-65) The word of the father is broken down, reversed in position and dismantled amidst the play of multiplicity: “Rutlandbaconsouthamptonshakespeare or another poet of the same name in the comedy of errors wrote Hamlet” (*U* 9.866-67). Stephen repeatedly re-evaluates positions as he questions the dead author: “he was not the father of his own son merely but, being no more a son, he was and felt himself the father of all his race” (*U* 9.868-69). The reversal of positions is juxtaposed in the two images of the father and the son, as the creator and the created face each other. Here the question of origin leads to the question of responsibility.⁶³⁰ Stephen confronts the thought that he is responsible for his own image that he faces in the other, who is absent: “Himself his

⁶²⁷ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 400.

⁶²⁸ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 402.

⁶²⁹ Blnachot, *The Work of Fire*, p. 322.

⁶³⁰ See Eide, *Ethical Joyce*, p. 80. Eide argues that Stephen is “unable to become an ethical agent by recognising his responsibility to others”, because he rejects the “habitat provided by his mother”. However, this argument can be seen as the starting point of the problem of the ethics of alterity.

own father” (*U* 9.876). Just like, “Hamlet, the black prince, is Hamnet Shakespeare” (*U* 9.882). Breaking down limits becomes an ethical problem, for now responsibility shifts from the one to the all. However, the subject refuses to accept the lack of an origin. Thus, he continues to reverse and displace the question of being as the image of the self becomes a fragmented part of the whole that never returns to the same. This thought brings us to the Nietzschean dance of transvaluation and return, which Blanchot registers in the dialectical thought of destruction for the being in the perpetual movement of becoming:⁶³¹ “We must shatter the universe, unlearn our respect for the Whole”.⁶³² This thought is addressed to the subject that creates the world as self-producer. Accordingly, Zarathustra begs: “You good dancers . . . You Higher Men, redeem the graves, awaken the corpses . . . *The world is deep!*”⁶³³ Ironically, the act of transferring the image to the other allows the critic to read within the text and not refer back to the author, because he remains in a grave. Each time Stephen tries to locate a centre outside the text, the question returns back to the text: “He has hidden his own name, a fair name William, in the plays, a super here, a clown there, as a painter of old Italy set his face in a dark corner of his canvas” (*U* 9.921-23).

The drama of being before an unknown question in “who” signs the name, repeats again as MAGEEGLINJOHN asks: “Names! What’s in a name?” (*U* 9.901) In addition, the signature of the dead author remains unknown for QUAKERLYSTER who asks the question: “What’s in a name? That is what we ask ourselves in childhood when we write the name that we are told is ours” (*U* 9.927-928). Later, during the writing of the *Wake*, Joyce “would ask pointedly ask to be told who” had written *Ulysses*”.⁶³⁴ The power of contestation haunts Stephen’s theory, just as it

⁶³¹ Spinks, *Friedrick Nietzsche*, p. 120.

⁶³² Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 155.

⁶³³ Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, p. 329.

⁶³⁴ Heath, “Ambiviolences”, in *Post-Structuralist Joyce*, p. 34.

haunts Derrida, who begs to know the final “question” to the signature named Joyce: “Who signs? Who signs *what* in Joyce’s name?”⁶³⁵ The neuter points to the exteriority: “Read the skies . . . Stephanou-menos. Where’s your configuration? Stephn, Stephen, cut the bread even. S. D (U 9.939-40). The question of the name is stripped down to the initials of the subject that confronts ineliminable excess that points to the unknown question: “Whereto?” Indeed, the Greek mythical hero named Dedalus is suggested as a possible answer to the “Higher man” reflected in the image of the eagle hawk flying above and beyond the paradox of the language prism: “Fabulous artificer. The hawklike man. You flew, Whereto?” (U 9.952) The critic reframes being in the “open” question mark of a circle around an absent centre, which constitutes “effacing discourse” in the erasure of language.⁶³⁶ Indeed, it is here that “difference” reveals “What has SPOKEN” is spirit.⁶³⁷ The subject is faced with the name in question bought to life in the “THERE IS”⁶³⁸ that portrays the “negativity without unemploy” as theorised by Bataille.⁶³⁹ The notion of the “there is” for Blanchot attests to an unspeakable sacred presence. Furthermore, Blanchot argues that negativity without employ leads us to a “radical negation, a negation that has nothing more to negate, is *affirmed*”.⁶⁴⁰ The erasure of being marks the limit to the “gift of grace” at “degree zero” in a “kind of flash”.⁶⁴¹ Indeed, Shakespeare is perceived as the “infinite variety everywhere in the world” that is the inaccessible God at a distance: “He is the ghost and the prince. He is all in all” (U 9.1018). However, for the being that is crossed in

⁶³⁵ Derrida, *Acts of Literature*, p. 289.

⁶³⁶ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 205.

⁶³⁷ Maurice Blanchot, *A Voice from Elsewhere*, trans. Charlotte Mandell (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007), p. 9.

⁶³⁸ Blanchot, *A Voice from Elsewhere*, p. 25.

⁶³⁹ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 205.

⁶⁴⁰ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 206.

⁶⁴¹ Blnachot, *The Book to Come*, p. 207.

the dialectic of negativity seen in one in all, being now faces the “horror of existence deprived of the world . . . behind the meaning of words” that unfold in alterity.⁶⁴²

Stephen’s lucid insight into the dialogic of negativity coincides with him seeing beyond reason to unreason as he sees his being in death. Mulligan alludes to the fact that Stephen is showing signs of madness as he tells Stephen that he is a crazy nutcase: “Cuckoo! Cuckoo! . . . O word of fear” (*U* 9.1025).⁶⁴³ However, Stephen proceeds to defend Shakespeare, whom he sees as a silent witness to the drama recreated. Indeed, he tries to recapture the real in the everyday that refuses to leave a trace of presence behind in the “scandal of what *seems* real”.⁶⁴⁴ Stephen compares God to Shakespeare as he recognises the significance of being reborn in literature: “After God Shakespeare has created most” (*U* 9.1028-29). Here again, just like God, Shakespeare gives birth to presence out of absence, because literature embodies the essence of creation that gives birth to nothing that is a double. In order for the work to stand alone and “be” God has to remove his presence: “After the Fall Jahwe asks Adam ‘Where are you? This question signifies that henceforth man can no longer be found or situated except in the place of the question’”.⁶⁴⁵ Hence, the real truth is born between the letters of the word and the reflected image displaced in the mirror of the thing that is rediscovered in the circularity of being: “Every life is many days, day after day. We walk through ourselves, meeting robbers, ghosts, giants, old men, young men, wives, widows, brothers-in-love. But always meeting ourselves” (*U* 9.1044-46). Therefore, each particle of being, reframed in the image of the other, is created by the being in relation to the difference that is part of the whole in question. The whole is ironically fragmented and incomplete, because it is impossible to give an

⁶⁴² Blanchot, *The Work of Fire*, p. 334.

⁶⁴³ Roughley, *Reading Derrida Reading Joyce*, p. 13.

⁶⁴⁴ Blanchot, *A Voice from Elsewhere*, p. 39.

⁶⁴⁵ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 14.

absolute picture of the entire cosmos. We are told that the “playwright who wrote the folio of his world” is “all in all of us” (*U* 9.1050). This does not mean that the truth is closed; it is open in a circle in the space of literature that bares the negativity of being secret. This theory retreats to a “negative theology” in the face of “old Nobodaddy” who withdraws: “abandoning a kind of region within himself, a sort of mystical space”.⁶⁴⁶ Hence, it also marks Stephen’s negative thought that does not stop at God’s absence, but constitutes the question of the final limit to being at the limit-experience.

A sort of ontological atheism emerges in Stephen’s double signification of being before a lack of God in the theory of the dead author.⁶⁴⁷ However, John Eglinton fears that Stephen’s theory is in “excess” of reason as he recognises the fragmentation between being and language as a sign of madness: “You are a delusion . . . You have bought us all this way to show us a French triangle. Do you believe your own theory?” (*U* 9.1064-66) Descombes notes that it is “the madman (who ‘exceeds reason’)” and “the savage (who ‘precedes’ it).”⁶⁴⁸ While his fellow peers see Stephen’s theory of the unknown name as an abstract paradox, he himself clearly doubts the dialectic of “all in all in all of us” (*U* 9.1049-50).⁶⁴⁹ A significant feature of the limit-experience is the negative thought that “will at the very least begin by not stopping at God any more than God’s silence or absence”.⁶⁵⁰ Stephen breaks down as he states that he does not have an answer to the final question of “who” signs Hamlet. Thus, he refuses to answer: “I believe, O Lord, help my unbelief. That is, help me to believe? Egomen. Who to unbelieve? Other chap” (*U* 9.1078-80). The paradox stems from the problem of being that is traced back to the image of the word redirected back to the corpus in the space of death. Here, Stephen appears to be facing

⁶⁴⁶ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 116.

⁶⁴⁷ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 117.

⁶⁴⁸ Descombes, *Modern French Philosophy*, p. 104.

⁶⁴⁹ Roughley, *Reading Derrida Reading Joyce*, p. 13.

⁶⁵⁰ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 206.

a truth: “The atheist does not believe in God: this is the first degree of truth . . . And to love in him only his absence . . . may be a love that is absolutely pure”.⁶⁵¹ Indeed, being is not present in the mark of the trace that signs in the “name” of the subject and also the name of God. Therefore, being and God both remain entombed in the irreducibility of the word erased. Ironically, Stephen remains faithful to the betrayal resurrected in the relationship between the text and the reader that breathes life. That is why the desire for unity envisaged in Stephen’s quest for a return to the lost womb is signified in the mother’s breath, or ashes of breath. Hence he struggles to reconcile the image of the kiss in death with birth that remains cut like circumcision.⁶⁵² For the Jew, to be circumcised is a symbolic reminder that being is cut from God, and this thought filters into the “irreducible strangeness” Stephen senses in the “absent-word”.⁶⁵³ The act of creation and the problem of genesis is enacted in a breaking apart.

In “Circe” Stephen shows negative thought that returns to the fragmented image of being as he recites Hamlet’s soliloquy on death: “To have or not to have that is the question” (*U* 15.3522). Stephen then confronts a mirage of dead images that usher in the past to the present. Once again, he delivered a poem to the class recited earlier in the day to his pupils: “The fox crew, the cocks flew/ The bells in heaven/ Were striking eleven. / ’Tis time for her poor soul/ To get out of heaven” (*U* 15.3577-81). The repetition of dead images follows with Zoe that states: “Hamlet, I am thy father’s gimlet” (*U* 15.3655). Following this imaginary event Father Dolan reappears from *A Portrait* to tell Stephen: “Any boy want flogging? Broke his glasses? (*U* 15.3671) Indeed, Conmee arises from the dead to speak to Stephen as a ghost: “I’m sure that Stephen is a very good little boy” (*U* 15.3676). The subject’s encounter with

⁶⁵¹ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 111.

⁶⁵² See Caputo, *The Prayers and Tears of Jacques Derrida*, p. 250. Caputo states that Derrida uses the metaphor of circumcision to uphold the theory of the “Cut” that opens the word to the “*tout autre*”. Here Caputo suggests that Derrida pays homage to the Jewish God named “Jahweh” or “separate One”.

⁶⁵³ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 385.

ghosts manifests itself in the signs of guilt in the need for redemption. Clearly, Christian guilt haunts Stephen, as he is not able to reconcile or redeem the past that calls him to be responsible for the dead. Indeed, the entire text can be read as a desire for redemption for Stephen's being that is called into question, by the voices that pass judgement. His refusal of unity returns to the question of God once again, as he continues to be held responsible for the past as he tries to break free. But still he is imprisoned by the past as he faces his dead father Simon, then his fictional father/son/Boom, then the unknown word/God. Surprisingly, Shakespeare makes an appearance as a ghost too: "Tis the loud laugh bespeaks the vacant mind . . . wastest invisible. Gaze" (*U* 15.3826-27). This comment suggests that being is faced with the negativity that characterises the nihilism, which is associated with Nietzsche's thought of the death of God. Ironically, God's death leaves a place for the Overman to create.⁶⁵⁴ However, Stephen struggles to accept "how something can be created from nothing", and it is the Overman who overcomes the problem of nothingness and creates "free for death, and maintains this pure essence of will in willing nothingness".⁶⁵⁵ Indeed, Nietzsche argues that if there is a God, man ceases to create and be free with no limits.

The thought of Nietzsche's theory of the "eternal return" reveals itself in Stephen's being that becomes more fragmented in the play that constitutes redoubling of repetition.⁶⁵⁶ According to Blanchot, this theory "represents the logical vertigo that Nietzsche himself could not escape".⁶⁵⁷ Indeed, Stephen's presence becomes more disjointed and multiple-dimensional with splintered images breaking the scene apart. The discontinuity of being presents itself as the "face of Martin Cunningham" reclaims the face of Shakespeare who is now seen in his own "*beardless face*" (*U*

⁶⁵⁴ Spinks, *Friedrich Nietzsche*, p. 121.

⁶⁵⁵ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 148.

⁶⁵⁶ Van Boheemen-Saaf, *Joyce, Derrida, Lacan, and the Trauma of History*, p. 198.

⁶⁵⁷ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 148.

15.3855). Stephen breaks out in a gibberish thought: “Thousand places of entertainment to expenses your evenings with lovely ladies sailing gloves and other things” (*U* 15.3881-83). Blanchot argues that in order for there to be a “rebeginning” there must be “ruin”.⁶⁵⁸ Hence, the subject breaks apart in the ruinous images dividing “heaven and hell”, which follows into the scene of the “terrific of religion’s things mockery seen in a universal world” (*U* 15.3889-91). The excessive number of random images culminates into an obsession with prostitution then spirals out into the resurrection of a demonic “vampire”. The subject returns back to the name of Shakespeare, as he mentions the word “double”. Essentially, he becomes a parody of limitless experiences in the “absence” of language that constitutes his being present before infinity, just as his fantasy of being multi-minded extends to his being envisaged in the multiple personalities.⁶⁵⁹ Moreover, the image of Shakespeare is resurrected in the metamorphosis of Simon, who comes back from the dead to haunt him as another dead father. The artist’s dead father encourages his son to fight for the justice of Ireland, while whispering a hidden secret to him: “That’s right . . . Ho, boy! Are you going to win? Hoop! Pschatt! Head up! Keep our flag flying!” (*U* 15.3946-48) A fox is then chased by hounds, which reveals Stephen’s previous fixation with his dead mother’s corpse. It is here that he sees himself in the image of the silent fox that repetitiously digs up the dead, as Simon shouts: “Think of your mother’s people” (*U* 15.4137). By doing so, his mind “collides with the past” while turning will back.⁶⁶⁰

Time spins off its dial and out into orbit in the repetition of images that keep on turning outward as the artist is stuck in the infinite time of an endless circle as he keeps returning to the dead. Indeed, Stephen falls into the limitless of an eternal return

⁶⁵⁸ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 249.

⁶⁵⁹ Sheldon Brivic, *The Veil of Signs: Joyce, Lacan and Perception* (*The Veil of Signs: Joyce, Lacan, and Perception*. Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1991), p. 122.

⁶⁶⁰ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 148.

in the space of language that haunts him. Simon's words related to death usher in the image of Stephen's dead mother yet again, as the affliction of separation refuses to offer him repose or unity. The dead mother is also linked to Stephen's earliest image of the Irish spirit, which he recognises in his father's request to return to the original voice of Ireland that is now displaced by the impure English language. The excess of trauma Stephen faces in "separation" manifests itself in the dances around the room, as his mind spins out of control, and into another delusional fantasy.⁶⁶¹ Funnily Nietzsche claims: "I would only believe in a God that could dance".⁶⁶² It is quite apparent that here: "Nothing ends, everything begins again; the other is still the same. Midnight is only a dissimulated moon".⁶⁶³ Just like Hamlet's dead father, Stephen's mother is resurrected from the dead again in the repetition of difference: "Stephen's mother, emaciated, rises stark through the floor, in leper grey with a wreath of faded orangeblossoms and a torn bridal veil" (*U* 15.4156-58). The dead mother's corpse arises as a ghoul as time turns back erasing time in a circle that shows a "face worn and noseless, green with gravemould. Her hair is scant and lank. She fixes her bluecircled hallow eyesockets on Stephen and opens her toothless mouth uttering a silent word" (*U* 15.4159-61).⁶⁶⁴ However, Stephen refuses to believe this is his dead mother, as he begs to know the silent word that is "not" spoken. He feels that the image of death is a wicked lie or trick being played out. But the dead ghost tells him: "All must go through it, Stephen . . . You too. Time will come" (*U* 15.4182-84). Stephen refuses to be held responsible for her death as he confesses, "cancer did it, not I" (*U* 15.4187). The ghost begs the subject to pray to God, "repent, Stephen". But,

⁶⁶¹ Van Boheemen-Saaf, *Joyce, Derrida, Lacan, and the Trauma of History*, p.19

⁶⁶² Nietzsche, *The Portable Nietzsche*, p. 153.

⁶⁶³ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 149.

⁶⁶⁴ Roughley, *Reading Derrida Reading Joyce*, p. 91.

he refuses: “nihilism is the impossibility of being done with and finding a way out”.⁶⁶⁵

Clearly Stephen feels the anguish of responsibility as he resists unity from his maker.

The exegesis of Stephen’s critical problem is bound with “religion without religion”, because the limit is literally declared “off limits”⁶⁶⁶. The dead mother tells Stephen to beg for forgiveness: “Repent, Stephen” (*U* 15.4198). However, Stephen rejects her plea to pray. His mother refuses to be dismissed as a figment of his imagination: “Repent! O, the fire of hell! . . . Beware! . . . Beware! God’s hand! (*U* 15.4212-19) Stephen is filled with revolt against his mother’s unified belief in Christ. Thus, he calls the ghost an impostor: “The corpsechewer! Raw head and bloody bones!” (*U* 15.4214-15) Here, we can note that Stephen is the ‘Higher’ man, the man of the whole and synthesis who is a failure. According to Blanchot, the Higher man “has failed because he has succeeded, has reached his goal . . . where everything is realised”.⁶⁶⁷ Seen from this perspective, Stephen’s mother’s death is the main problem: “Behind the written word, no one is present, but it gives a voice to absence . . . the absence of God”.⁶⁶⁸ Spinks states that the “challenge presented to the Higher man is to accept responsibility of a life without God”⁶⁶⁹ Stephen recognises his being separated from an infinite God that remains unknown byway of a theology of absence.⁶⁷⁰ Blanchot perceives this nihilism as humanism for man is set free; “man who must create the world and above all create meaning. An immense task, intoxicating task”.⁶⁷¹ Stephen fights for freedom and liberty by adopting Nietzsche’s thought of smashing up the whole into fragments, as a means of uncovering things from a new origin. However, this “disastrous” truth shows that “there is never an

⁶⁶⁵ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 149.

⁶⁶⁶ Caputo and Scaloni, *God, the Gift, and Postmodernism*, p. 4.

⁶⁶⁷ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 155.

⁶⁶⁸ Blanchot, *A Voice from Elsewhere*, p. 38.

⁶⁶⁹ Spinks, *Friedrich Nietzsche*, p. 119.

⁶⁷⁰ Jean-Luc Marion, “In the Name”, in *God, The Gift, and Postmodernism*, p. 36.

⁶⁷¹ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 145.

absolute answer, but always perpetual questioning”, as Blanchot points out in the “DISAPPEARANCE” of being that is “never worn out” or revealed.⁶⁷² Essentially, Nietzsche foregrounds the subject as part of all in the question, but, Stephen refuses unity with all negative thought, as a disaster unfolds, whereby he picks up the “ashplant” and “smashes the chandelier” to run out of the brothel (*U* 15.4242). Here, stage directions parody Stephen’s vision of smashing up the text that collides with the limitless space of fragmentation: “Time’s livid final flame leaps and, in the following darkness, ruin of all space, shattered glass and toppling masonry” (*U* 15.4243-44).

The more Stephen tries to run away from the thought of God, the more he runs towards a hidden God. Here, Stephen fails, because man disappears in the question: “The fact that man disappears—the man to come is the man of the end . . . the being in whom the whole in its becoming has become being”.⁶⁷³ This thought is reflected in Stephen’s reference to “Sisyphus” as he runs out of the Brothel. Blanchot states that the extreme limit of hell can be seen in the tragic image of being, “Sisyphus, happy-unhappy man of hell, brought a light to the dark days of our time”.⁶⁷⁴ Blanchot proceeds to state that, Sisyphus is “not on the side of nothingness”, but a “man who still works but uselessly”, because he is “given over by this absence to the measurelessness of an eternal rebeginning”.⁶⁷⁵ The eternal rebeginning is evident as he keeps on returning to the thought of death. Sisyphus is a man that encounters a region of “extreme suffering”, by “extreme affliction”, by the “desolation of shadows” as he is caught between “being and nothingness” a “swarming mass of inexistence”.⁶⁷⁶ This description of Sisyphus resembles Stephen’s being that continuously faces the crisis in relation to the unknown word in death. The myth

⁶⁷² Blanchot, *A Voice from Elsewhere*, pp. 24-25.

⁶⁷³ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 155.

⁶⁷⁴ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 175.

⁶⁷⁵ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 175.

⁶⁷⁶ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 175.

states that Sisypus must remain chained to a large bolder in order to push the rock uphill only to watch it roll down, again. The thought of being stuck in the endless, task coincides with Stephen's being that keeps on returning to the dead origin. This futile thought supports Blanchot's notion that it is impossible to die in death.⁶⁷⁷ Indeed, the return also coincides with Nietzsche writing on the Overman that confronts nihilism in being in a state of eternal return. Blanchot states that Nietzsche's thesis consists of a system that also resembles Stephen's encounter with death: "first the death of God, its consequences nihilism, and finally the eternal return, and this is a consequence" of negativity in "overturning".⁶⁷⁸ The "eternal thought" is accomplished in the instant of presence at the limit to being in language that is "indestructible".⁶⁷⁹ Here, Stephen's limit-experience of the return affirms absence of being in the text, but he does not overcome the problem of being bound to language as other in alterity.

In retrospect, this chapter showed that Stephen's desire for unity with the image of the dead mother acted as a catalyst for his desire to return to his origin. In the face of death, his being confronted the image of life associated with the name of his maker. Indeed, his quest resembled Nietzsche's attempt to critique and re-evaluate language before death. Ironically, the critique was narrated by the space of the narrative that stalked Stephen as a double in the neuter. Thus, there were two texts running parallel alongside each other, as the neuter acted as a silent critic that commented on the text in the form of negativity. Stephen responded to the call from the Outside as he questioned being before the word. His presence revealed itself as a fragment in relation to an infinite corpus of dead relations, including his mother and father as he recognised his being dispersed in language. Stephen found it impossible to reconcile the fact that in the physical world the parents are present, but once death

⁶⁷⁷ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 209.

⁶⁷⁸ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 273.

⁶⁷⁹ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 155.

enters the equation, being in relation to part of totality in creation does not add up. Because the presence of being in the word cannot be traced back to a home, in the space of literature, the subject is called to be responsible for its own presence in the space of language where there is only an absent God. Here, Stephen was not able to justify the ethic of responsibility in the disappearance of the text. He was perpetually stuck at a dead lock at the limit, because each time he questioned an origin in the death of the word, he returned to absence where he was “left leaning over an empty hole” outside without relation to himself.⁶⁸⁰ Here he reveals Nietzsche’s eternal return in theory. Stephen clearly failed to overcome the negativity in being before “nothingness”; therefore he is the Higher man, at the limit or a perpetual return and not the Ultimate or Overman. The ramification of this experience of being at the limit of the rerun to the question mark that kept on turning and turning and returning to the space of literature, in the text, showed Jewish piety in negativity in being stuck in a desert, in between the possibility of the impossible toward infinity itself. As such he resembles traits of the Jewish being, but his refusal veers toward a fierce negative theology that ironically keeps on spinning round an absent centre. The next chapter will examine Bloom’s being that faces the trial of being in relation to the difference of being in language in *Ulysses*. Here the outside space of language comes to occupy the voices inside of the text, as his presence keeps on doubling into difference at each turn.

⁶⁸⁰ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 174.

CHAPTER FIVE

Difference in Being for Bloom in *Ulysses*

“‘The God of the Jews is the highest separation, he excludes all union’ or ‘In the Jewish spirit there is an insurmountable abyss’ . . . this is the notion that if, in fact, there is infinite separation, it falls to speech to make it the place of understanding, and if there is an insurmountable abyss, speech crosses this abyss. Distance is not abolished, it is not even diminished; on the contrary, it is maintained, preserved in its purity by the rigor of the speech that upholds the absoluteness of difference”.⁶⁸¹

This chapter will examine the “difference in being” for Bloom that unfolds in the language of negativity in “Hades”, “Aeolus”, “Cyclops”, “Circe” and “Eumaeus” in *Ulysses*. Bloom’s encounter with Stephen’s father, Simon depicts the first encounter of the being in relation to the negative “other” of difference. The Jewish and Hellenic subjects cut across paths again at midday, whereby Bloom makes a telephone call to the newspaper office. This section is a parody of a news narrative marked by sub-headings. Subsequently, the question of being is judged by the unknown voice of the “neuter” that governs the thick plot in the Tavern. It will become evident that Bloom’s being forms its identity from the “other” subject’s “by way of distance” and separation.⁶⁸² Indeed, the neuter embodies the narrator’s “speech of commentary”, while it summons the Jew before a trial to the experience of negativity.⁶⁸³ The neuter comments on the being from the narrative and also “free indirect speech” while “redoubling” the text from the exteriority, just like the Midrash of the Torah.⁶⁸⁴ Here, the neutral “spectral, ghostlike”⁶⁸⁵ presence haunts the text that “comes from beyond

⁶⁸¹ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 128.

⁶⁸² Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 126.

⁶⁸³ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 389.

⁶⁸⁴ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 391.

⁶⁸⁵ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 386.

the grave”, and is linked to the unknown space of the Outside.⁶⁸⁶ While it appears that Bloom is the main protagonist of the encyclopaedic self-consciousness, it is the language of the neuter that foregrounds the doubling of being in “difference” seen as “the holy ghost in the inkwell”.⁶⁸⁷ The thought of difference spills over into Nighttown as the self and other relations reveal negativity in the reversal of perspectives. Indeed, Booth notes that the author, like the neuter is “present in every speech given by any character who has had conferred upon him, in whatever manner”.⁶⁸⁸ The subject’s ethical decision to respond to the face of the negative other in the face of difference in the narrative will be examined in Bloom who is put on trial for his betrayal in infidelities. However, the subject that is put on trial for adultery welcomes the face of difference in the other subject’s voices that questions his being. In fact, the problem of difference characterises Bloom’s Jewish being in separation. In accord, Blanchot argues that for the Jew, “the origin is a decision; this is the decision of Abraham separating himself from what is”.⁶⁸⁹ Bloom’s character is a parody of the Jew exposed as the outsider who is a “separated I” existing in “multiplicity”.⁶⁹⁰ Levinas argues that in “a world without multiplicity, language loses all social significance”.⁶⁹¹ Here, Bloom is the multiple being that is compared to God’s prophet Elijah who responds to the call of the everyday, in multiplicity as he teaches the proverb, “love thy stranger as thyself”.⁶⁹² Bloom welcomes plurality in being that attests to a “radical alterity of the other” present in the “hedonistic morality” which advocates “freedom”.⁶⁹³ Seen in this light, “I am just the more guilty I am”.⁶⁹⁴ Indeed,

⁶⁸⁶ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 337. Blanchot links alterity to the Outside, whereby, “this language itself as that by way of which it looks for a way out, an exit to disappear into or an Outside”.

⁶⁸⁷ Dettmar, *The Illicit Joyce*, p. 172.

⁶⁸⁸ Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction*, p. 18.

⁶⁸⁹ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 126.

⁶⁹⁰ Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, p. 58.

⁶⁹¹ Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, p. 217.

⁶⁹² Epstein, *Judaism*, p. 59.

⁶⁹³ Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, p. 121.

the subject's trial of betrayal depicts an ontological argument that will be explored in the subject that comes to face the problem of being in the experience of alterity.

From the outset, there is a constant play of Jewish theology and Greek philosophy that runs throughout the discourse, leading to the question of being before the Logos—Word.⁶⁹⁵ This begins with Bloom's being that can be read as an "other" figment of Stephen's imagination that has entered the scene as an imaginary double. This is evident in the dialectical theory of negativity based on a reversal of perspectives: "you are the dispossessed son: I am the murdered father" (*U* 9.179). This negative thought coincides with a reversal of perspectives in being multiple from the position of the other. Blanchot notes that "the writer is not only several people in one, but each stage of himself, denies all the others".⁶⁹⁶ Indeed, this comment runs parallel with Stephen's theory that Shakespeare is Hamlet. Thus, Bloom can be seen as the artist Stephen's son through a reversal of positions: "himself his own father" (*U* 9. 878). Moreover, this thought begs the question of authorship: "if the father who has not a son be not a father can the son who has not a father be a son?" (*U* 9.864-65) Blanchot notes an ethical problem in the reversal of positions: "The responsibility with which I am charged is not mine, and because of it I am no longer myself".⁶⁹⁷ If the search of an origin in being leads back to the "logos" of language, then truth can only be discovered in the dialectic of the everyday language. Hence negation returns to "the Other that is cast in the relation of language".⁶⁹⁸ However, the other is never the same, because the return of being is always a secondary experience for the "dialectic".⁶⁹⁹ For example the "image" of man comes to fruition secondary to the

⁶⁹⁴ Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, p. 244.

⁶⁹⁵ Epstein, *Judaism*, p. 197. According to Philo the Jewish philosopher "Logos" is "the second God".

⁶⁹⁶ Blanchot, *The Work of Fire*, p. 312.

⁶⁹⁷ Blanchot, *The Writing of the Disaster*, p. 13.

⁶⁹⁸ Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, p. 69.

⁶⁹⁹ See Descombes, *Modern French Philosophy*, p. 10.

object: “We see, then we imagine, after the object comes the image: ‘After . . . Here distance is in the heart of the thing’.”⁷⁰⁰ Thus, in the act of reflection “what is” becomes “what it was not” in the “here”.⁷⁰¹ Hence, Stephen’s vision of being “miradminded” in the image of “all in all” is relative to the dialectical reflection of the two fathers facing each other in Hades: “Come on, Simon. After you, Mr Bloom said. Mr Dedalus covered himself quickly and got in, saying: Yes, yes” (*U* 6.4-7). While Simon comes before Bloom, he enters the scene after as the subject is called into question before the negative thought of the artist. While Bloom may not be his real father or his son, through the reflection of a reversal of positions, the master questions the subject bound to the “duality” of being: “My child is a stranger (Isaiah 49), but a stranger who is not only mine, for he *is* me”.⁷⁰² By the end of Bloom’s journey home the experience of being becomes ethical, because a new way of recognising responsibility is justified in the two sides of the question. The question turns back to an origin of being, navigated by negative thought. Looking back, Bloom’s relations affirm “something like a new origin” in the being multiple as he stands in relation to the space of language in sheer difference, while he too is questioned within language.

In their journey through “Hades”, it is Bloom that first calls Simon’s son Stephen Dedalus into question: “who is that? Your son and heir. Where is he? Mr Dedalus said, stretching over across” (*U* 6.41-42). Indeed, this is the first juncture in which the narrative of the Hellenic artist Stephen merges with the narrative of the Jewish hero Bloom. It is also important to note that the beginning of the “limit-experience” begins with “being” that is put “in question”.⁷⁰³ The calling of the being into question is inextricably entwined with the presence of the other ethics: “The

⁷⁰⁰ Blanchot, *The Space of Literature*, p. 255.

⁷⁰¹ Blanchot, *The Space of Literature*, p. 256.

⁷⁰² Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, p. 267.

⁷⁰³ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 203.

strangeness of the Other, his irreducibility to the I, to my thoughts and my possessions, is precisely accomplished as a calling into question of my spontaneity, as ethics”.⁷⁰⁴ Here the subject calls the other subject facing him into question as Simon judges his son. Levinas argues that: “The child is the parents . . . He is me a stranger to myself”.⁷⁰⁵ It is ironic that Simon has to cross himself to have a look for his son, while his identity is questioned. After the reader is told that the son is alone, Simon makes a snide comment about Mulligan. He asks: “was that Mulligan cad with him? His *fidus Achates*?” (*U* 6.48) Simon expresses disgust over his son’s choice of friendship, because Mulligan is a disciple of the romantic philosopher Nietzsche: “He’s in with a lowdown crowd, Mr Dedalus snarled. That Mulligan is a contaminated bloody doubledyed ruffian by all accounts. His name stinks all over Dublin” (*U* 6.64-65).⁷⁰⁶ Simon is ashamed of Stephen’s friendship with the Nietzschean philosopher, who criticises morals in his ethics on life in *The Anti-Christ*.⁷⁰⁷ Indeed, Nietzsche’s ethics is a critique of “truth”, “reason”, and “being”.⁷⁰⁸ Simon alludes to the fact that his son’s morality may be directly corrupted via the philosopher’s ethics on truth: “I won’t have her bastard of a nephew ruin my son” (*U* 6.70).⁷⁰⁹ This scene presents the problem of difference in relations and reveals negative thought “to come” which prevails in a Nietzschean vein. While Stephen is absent his presence consumes the scene that is focused on paternity and the ethic of moral responsibility. The son’s position comes to occupy the self-consciousness of the real father. Indeed, Simon’s desire for unity with the image of his son culminates into

⁷⁰⁴ Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, p. 43.

⁷⁰⁵ Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, p. 267.

⁷⁰⁶ See Davidson, *James Joyce and the Construction of Jewish Identity*, p. 99. Davidson states that John Gogarty was a “writer, wit and physician” that had a major influence on Joyce. Indeed, Joyce was studying Nietzsche at the time of this friendship, and Gogarty became his model for Mulligan.

⁷⁰⁷ See Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols/ The Anti-Christ*.

⁷⁰⁸ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 162.

⁷⁰⁹ See Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy and The Genealogy of Morals*, trans. Francis Golffing (London: Penguin, 1956).

the memory in mourning for his son Rudy: “If little Rudy had lived. See him grow up . . . My son. Me in his eyes. Strange feeling it would be. From me” (*U* 6.74-77). As such the subject has exchanged positions with the absent son present in dead thought.

Bloom’s “multiple being” manifests itself in the graveyard scene as he faces everyday images of life reflected back in images of dead objects. The fragmented portrait of being in relation to death unfolds in the perception of being in the heart of life: “*I am the resurrection and the life*. That touches a man’s inmost heart” (*U* 6.670). The image of death ushers in a flood of images associated with the heart that is broken down in the centre of the human body: “Broken heart. A pump after all, pumping thousands of gallons of blood every day. One fine day gets bunged up: and there you are. Lots of them lying around here: lungs, hearts, livers” (*U* 6.673-76). The metaphor of the broken heart is replaced by images of an afterlife, which runs head on with the thought of death: “Old rusty pumps: damn the thing else. The resurrection and the life. Once you’re dead you are dead. That last day idea” (*U* 6.676-78). The limit to being in life is death and this thought is the most extreme thought in the wake of judgement. Blanchot argues that: “He who includes death among all that is in his control controls himself extremely”.⁷¹⁰ However, while the subject “inhabits language and in some sense constitutes it” the anonymous presence of language hides in the silent space of “infinite distance”, while it produces the work of being.⁷¹¹ Levinas argues: “we live from acts—and from the very act of being”.⁷¹² Sequentially, Bloom comments on the inter-textual relationships he faces before death: “I daresay the soil would be quite fat with corpse-manure, bones, flesh, nails. Charnel-houses. Dreadful” (*U* 6.776-77). At this stage, the neuter spies upon Bloom’s presence, while doubling up on the facts: “Mr Bloom walked unheeded along his grove by saddened angels, crosses, broken pillars,

⁷¹⁰ Blanchot, *The Space of Literature*, p. 91.

⁷¹¹ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 380.

⁷¹² Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, p. 113.

family vaults, stone hopes praying with upcast eyes, old Ireland's hearts and hands" (*U* 6.928-30). Here the neuter relays events to the reader that are then played out by the subject. The play of broken images associated with death is then contrasted with a glimpse of hope for Bloom. Interestingly, the thought of hope resides in the sounds calling the subject back into question, which signals the limit to being present in language: "The Irishman's house is his coffin. Enbalming in catabombs, mummies" (*U* 6.822). Here, the "word" is metaphoric of the coffin that houses "being". If we recall the fact that language is according to Blanchot, "mute as a stone, as passive as a corpse", then the demand to know who is speaking arises.⁷¹³ Indeed, the Irishman is entombed in a play of negative thought as if buried alive. So too the Jewish being sees the book as the primary origin of his "dwelling place".⁷¹⁴ Accordingly, Derrida argues that for Edmond Jabès, the question of the book is comparable to the Jewish ethic of separation itself: "God is the child of his name . . . The letter is the separation and the limit in which meaning is liberated from its imprisonment in aphoristic solitude".⁷¹⁵

In "Aeolus", Bloom is compared to the Jewish prophet of the everyday, Elijah, as the plot shifts from the heart of the body to the heart of the text in the "letter". Indeed, the theme of death follows the subject that is now immersed in the typography of being judged by the letters of difference: "Cemetery put in of course on account of the symmetry" (*U* 7. 169-70). Bloom's being unfolds in the work of the everyday life as he is presented at the offices of the Freeman's Journal and the Evening Telegraph. He is depicted as the advertisement canvasser that acts as a "middle man". Ironically, each sketch of the portraits presented to the reader is separated by headlines representing difference. The titles form interruptions that break up the text, which is then broken up into different categories of subheadings. This begins with the first title

⁷¹³ Blanchot, *The Work of Fire*, p. 329.

⁷¹⁴ Blanchot, *The Space of Literature*, p. 75.

⁷¹⁵ Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, p. 71.

that refers to “the heart of the Hibernian metropolis” (*U* 7.1-2). The text now reads like a parody of the subject that is put into question in the very heart of the advertisements, which he dissects just as he is doubly dissected within the text. This fact highlights a doubling encounter that portrays alterity for being in itself. In light of this fact the Jewish religious tradition foregrounds “the secret name of God (who) is the object of a special reverence” present in the “combination of letters”.⁷¹⁶ However, if the space of letters entombs man and the secret name for God, then this double relation posits language in one context. Indeed, the very letter embodies a secret link to the origin of being for the dialectic in opposition to the very word.⁷¹⁷ Bloom’s task is centred on the “printing words” and Simon Dedalus appears on the scene, which presents a form of doubling up for being in the images of texts within texts crossing over. However, while arranging the type of the texts Bloom is asked to place “two keys at the top”. Here one faces doubling of the structure in the form that becomes content. He is then told: “Two crossed keys here. A circle” (*U* 7.142). The text itself is doubled over and repeated by the copy of language, which has become a “circle” circling the text that it questions. So too the Rabbinic reading of the Midrash in the Torah forms a “multiplicity of indeterminate meanings” between the “word and the thing”.⁷¹⁸ The Midrash interpretation unfolds in the questioning of the letters.⁷¹⁹ Blanchot argues that language itself can be perceived from the abstract symbol of the “circle”. He theorises the image of language in relation to the “Outside” of being.⁷²⁰ He argues that language dwells in the “Outside” space of literature that is in theory a ring or circle that is “absence of any centre”, while it is anchored to life present in

⁷¹⁶ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 110.

⁷¹⁷ See Derrida and Ferraris, *A Taste for the Secret*, p. 33.

⁷¹⁸ Nadel, *Joyce and the Jews*, p. 122.

⁷¹⁹ Nadel, *Joyce and the Jews*, p. 124.

⁷²⁰ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 380.

words.⁷²¹ Ironically, in between the sketches of type, the neuter, which is linked back to the “very distance which language takes from its own lack”, blurs the boundaries between the real and the imaginary. Indeed the thought of the “cemetery” is replaced for a second time by the letters “symmetry” (*U* 7.169-70).⁷²² Here the impression of a ghost doubling the circle leaves behind the experience of a surrealist portrait of being, depicted in the imagery of being that exceeds limits into sounds of “limitless” letters. This is present in the obscure sound of the “sllt” that breaks up the text in the indirect speech of the neuter: “sllt . . . sllt . . . Sllt . . . sllt Slt” (*U* 7.174-77). According to Levinas, “The idea of totality and the idea of infinity differ in precisely in that the first is purely theoretical, while the second moral”.⁷²³ Indeed, the limitless vision is associated with the freedom of being “called into question” by language in the text speaking out.⁷²⁴ Thus the thought of freedom stems from the “separated existence”.⁷²⁵

The significance of Jewish thought of “separation” and “infinity” is relative to Derrida’s response to “*Shema Israel*” which he reads in “*Ulysses* Gramophone: Hear I Say Yes in Joyce”.⁷²⁶ Derrida argues that the reference to *Shema Israel* is a direct call from the unknown God to Elijah.⁷²⁷ For the Jewish being the name of God is forbidden in the mark of any idol. Therefore the text stands in as a testimony for being present in separation: “God’s gifts of speech and hearing are used as proof for the existence of an all-seeing and all-hearing providence”.⁷²⁸ The prophet Elijah claims to “hear His voice in the happenings of the day”.⁷²⁹ According to Jewish belief, God himself is “the most Hidden of all Hidden. At the same time, He is also called the

⁷²¹ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 380.

⁷²² Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 380.

⁷²³ Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, p. 83.

⁷²⁴ Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, p. 85.

⁷²⁵ Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, p. 168.

⁷²⁶ See Derrida, *Acts of Literature*, pp. 253-310.

⁷²⁷ Derrida, *Acts of Literature*, p. 271.

⁷²⁸ Epstein, *Judaism*, p. 195.

⁷²⁹ Epstein, *Judaism*, p. 59.

All”.⁷³⁰ Therefore, God is an absent presence, more present in absence. However, this thought reaches its pinnacle in the belief that “infinite separation becomes union with the infinite, and the presence-absence of God that is absent that offers itself ecstatically as the rapture of a presence”.⁷³¹ Blanchot argues that the subject that thinks “God is not” is “closer to God than the believer” who believes in false idols.⁷³² Hence, the prophet’s interpretation of the Torah is always related back to the everyday work of man which “justifies the ways of God to man”.⁷³³ Seen in this light, being is a continuous process of becoming a “creative process” in a world that is incomplete and infinite.⁷³⁴ The negative perception of being is regarded as a “search for its possibility”.⁷³⁵ The edge of possibility is marked in the decision of “experience”, which is enforced in the “radical reversal” of positions that justify ethical relationships.⁷³⁶ Thus, when Derrida questions Bloom’s testimony, he is in fact mimicking a Jewish call to an exterior presence separated: “A DISTANT VOICE”: “Hello? *Evening Telegraph* here . . . Hello? . . . Who’s there? . . . Yes . . . Yes . . . Yes . . . Bloom” (*U* 7.665). Derrida describes the “mental telephony” as a manifestation of the being that is beyond difference in separation. If one applies Blanchot’s theory of reversal, the subject is empowered by the language of negativity. Indeed, Derrida’s work maintains negativity, which he baptises in the word *différance*, “inscribing remoteness, distance, *différance*, and spacing [*espacement*] in the *phonē*, at the same time institutes, forbids, and interferes with the so-called monologue”.⁷³⁷ Being is called into question by a presence that is not only “negatively a separation

⁷³⁰ Epstein, *Judaism*, p. 235.

⁷³¹ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 104.

⁷³² Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 11.

⁷³³ Epstein, *Judaism*, p. 195.

⁷³⁴ Epstein, *Judaism*, p. 19.

⁷³⁵ Blanchot, *The Space of Literature*, p. 99.

⁷³⁶ Blanchot, *The Space of Literature*, p. 100.

⁷³⁷ Derrida, *Acts of Literature*, p. 271.

from all”, but also framed within frames of texts in “dedication to” the absent God.⁷³⁸ The sense of framing being spirals outwards in a “redoubling” into “non-origin”.⁷³⁹ Subsequently, Bloom is told to “go to hell . . . X is Davy’s pubhoushe, see? (U 7.672) Similarly, Heath notes that the spiralling narrative structure adds to the “multiplicity of levels” associated with the decentred being.⁷⁴⁰ Here we can connect the decentred being with the double band of Jewish thought that spirals into exteriority. The spiral effect unfolds in voices echoes, “*soultransfigured* and of *soultransfiguring*” (U 7.771).

The experience of separation for being before the “infinite” space of language becomes an ethical problem for Bloom in “Cyclops”. Essentially, not only is the subject circled by an unknown presence, but each act that comes across as a separate mark reveals a fragmented being that is circled as difference. Terrence Killeen argues that the breakage narrative forms are “punctuated by a number of passages which are vast expansions of the material already narrated” in the form of parody that presents “various styles of public discourse”.⁷⁴¹ Indeed, the “fragmentary speech” of the neuter calls the Jewish being into question: “Elijah! Elijah! And he answered with a main cry: Abba! Adonai! And they beheld Him even Him, ben Bloom” (U 12.1914-16).⁷⁴² Bloom is as Davidson states, “more a mosaic of Jewish representation” rather than a “static reality”.⁷⁴³ This is evident in the plurality of viewpoints that characterises Bloom. Indeed, his character portrait splits off into difference.⁷⁴⁴ Blanchot argues that the “world to come will not be a world of values. Neither good and evil nor virtue and vice will constitute its poles; rather, a relation . . . pushed to the fullest measure”.⁷⁴⁵ It

⁷³⁸ Epstein, *Judaism*, p. 23

⁷³⁹ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 249.

⁷⁴⁰ Heath, “Ambiviolences”, in *Post-Structuralist Joyce*, p. 46.

⁷⁴¹ Killeen, *Ulysses Unbound*, p. 130.

⁷⁴² Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 153.

⁷⁴³ Davidson, *James Joyce, Ulysses, and the Construction of Jewish Identity*, p. 8.

⁷⁴⁴ Cixous, “Joyce: The (r)use of writing”, in *Post-Structuralist Joyce*, p. 25.

⁷⁴⁵ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 223.

is clear that Bloom's being is "in relation without relation".⁷⁴⁶ Here, Davidson claims that Bloom "presents a spectrum of anti-Jewish myths for analysis".⁷⁴⁷ Thus, he presents a being which resembles a striking insight into Nietzsche's "Ultimate man" that re-thinks "Revaluation of All Values".⁷⁴⁸ Indeed, Nietzsche recognises truth in the Jewish response to being seen in "the question of being or not being" which is "antithesis".⁷⁴⁹ In fact, Davidson proceeds to argue that for Joyce, "Jews were revised through his reading of Friedrich Nietzsche".⁷⁵⁰ Typical Jewish traits are mocked by subjects, as Bloom is shown to be the marginalised character that is an outsider to his own race. Indeed, he embodies an excess of Jewish traits to the extent that he is more of an outcast than the common Jew. Blanchot claims, "Excess, energy, dissolution: these are keywords of the new epoch" that lead to the movement of "freedom".⁷⁵¹ The excessive character traits reveal the other subject's characterisation that refuses to accept the liberal stranger. The reader is told that Bloom, "starts with his jawbreakers about phenomenon and science and this phenomenon and the other phenomenon" (*U* 12.466). Furthermore, the Midrash is linked back to the Jewish response to the final question framed through interpretation: "*To every question, the Jew answers with a question*".⁷⁵² The Jew sees and hears the other as an ethical obligation in his response in light of antithesis. However, in this text the act of interpretation is over exaggerated. Thus, Bloom is met with excessive ridicule - "applause and hisses". He is called a "bloody lunatic", "argol bargol", "a wolf in sheep's clothing" and "that bloody jewman" (*U* 12.1667). To add excess to the parody, the "perverted Jew" does not fit into the stereotypical frame, because he is associated with pigs' meat. Pig's meat is

⁷⁴⁶ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 159.

⁷⁴⁷ Davidson, *James Joyce, Ulysses, and the Construction of Jewish Identity*, p. 8

⁷⁴⁸ Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols/ The Anti-Christ*, p. 197.

⁷⁴⁹ Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols/ The Anti-Christ*, p. 24.

⁷⁵⁰ Davidson, *James Joyce, Ulysses, and the Construction of Jewish Identity*, p. 14.

⁷⁵¹ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 223.

⁷⁵² Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, p. 67.

anti kosher, anti-Jewish food. The pork imagery of “baconhogs”, “sprigers”, “sowpigs” and “swine” manifests into a form of shadowing that haunts the subject. This haunting effect of doubling adds to the notion of the separated being in alterity.

This development brings to the fore Bloom’s defence of representing the negative “other” Jewish being outcast as a separate being of difference: “Persecution, says he, all the history of the world is full of it. Perpetual national hatred among nations” (*U* 12.1417-18). Bloom becomes “excited and resentful” as he feels that persecution is clearly “directed against him, if not explicitly”.⁷⁵³ The question of moral duty in the community is discussed in relation to the responsibility of one in all: “A Nation? Says Bloom. A nation is the same people living in the same place. By God, then, Ned, laughing, if that’s so I’m a nation for I’m living in the same place for the past five years” (*U* 12.1422-25). Bloom states that his nation is “Ireland”: “I was born here” (*U* 12.1431). But subsequently, Bloom also refers to his Jewish origin as he singles out his difference in being before the Irish man. He adds that he “belongs to a race too . . . that is hated and persecuted. Also now. This very moment. This very instant” (*U* 12.1467-68). Bloom is filled with contradiction as he holds up his fist before the thought of being the negative other as his ethic of being Jewish is centred on the notion of “love”. His thought follows Jewish ethics as he sees all men being divided: “Love thy fellow as thyself, ‘Hate not thou brother’, ‘Avenge not’, ‘Bear no grudge’, ‘Love the stranger’”.⁷⁵⁴ The Jewish teaching of the Torah teaches the moral ethic “not do unto others which are hateful to thee”, because “all being equal in the eyes of the law”.⁷⁵⁵ Likewise the Jewish faith has two principles of teaching “justice” and “mercy”, which centres on moral duty “love”.⁷⁵⁶ Epstein argues that: “The love of

⁷⁵³ Killeen, *Ulysses Unbound*, p. 135.

⁷⁵⁴ Epstein, *Judaism*, p. 155.

⁷⁵⁵ Epstein, *Judaism*, p. 28.

⁷⁵⁶ Epstein, *Judaism*, p. 135.

God leads to the ‘sanctification of His name’.⁷⁵⁷ Man is seen as “having been chosen by God” to “fulfil his creation” and this belief will be ushered in by “the Messiah”.⁷⁵⁸ Man is a separate unity responsible for all and justice is the God of Mercy (Love).⁷⁵⁹ Bloom defends this belief as he states “God is love”. Indeed, the thought of love is linked to the “life-giving principle” that stems from a desire for justice. Justice brings being back to the duality of negativity. However it must be noted the conception of God is inseparable from man’s relation to man.⁷⁶⁰ It is also important to reiterate the fact that the Jewish relation is “an irreducible relation”, which exists between God and man and also man and man.⁷⁶¹ Blanchot argues that being Jewish signifies: “The relation with the Unknown one can know only by way of distance”.⁷⁶² Subsequently, the scene that depicts a serious conversation based on the Jewish ethic of love turns toward a surrealist portrait of being envisaged in the parody of a nursery rhyme. “Bloom Elijah” is compared to the “*man in the moon was a jew, jew, jew*” (*U* 12.1801). The thought of accepting distance in the face of difference is a problem Bloom welcomes as he responds to the question of being before negativity in the word.

In “Circe” the Jewish being Bloom and the Greek philosopher Stephen cut across each other’s path on a bridge. Being Jewish is signified in the image of the exodus of becoming other as envisaged by Zarathustra: “What is great in man is that he is a bridge and not a goal . . . he is a going-across . . . as spirit over the bridge”.⁷⁶³ Indeed, the imagery of crossing portrays a reversal of perspectives as the two subjects mirror each other in the mirror held up by the neuter. The neuter summons Bloom: “*concave mirror at the side presents to him lovelorn longlost lugubru Boolloohoom,*

⁷⁵⁷ Epstein, *Judaism*, p. 158.

⁷⁵⁸ Epstein, *Judaism*, p. 139.

⁷⁵⁹ Epstein, *Judaism*, p. 236.

⁷⁶⁰ Epstein, *Judaism*, p. 57.

⁷⁶¹ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 125.

⁷⁶² Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 126.

⁷⁶³ Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, p. 44.

Grave Gladstone sees him level, Bloom for Bloom . . . convex mirror” (*U* 15.145-48).

It can be argued that while Bloom’s presence dominates most of the Nighttown scene, he may be a figment of the Stephen’s Nietzschean fragmented imagination since the artist is intoxicated. However, the blurring of the boundaries between the real and the imaginary proceeds as the hero is mocked repeatedly for the subject associated with unkosher food—pork. Evidently, the subject is shown to be entering a pork shop only to come out holding “a lukewarm pig’s crubeen” (*U* 15.158). The fact that Bloom repeatedly comes into contact with anti-Jewish food signifies an underlying pattern that is steeped in repetition. It also signals the fact he is not kosher; he is different even within his own race, because a typical Jewish subject is forbidden to touch unclean food. The Jewish body is regarded as a “sacred vessel” that adheres to “utmost purity”, thus by touching pork he is contaminating his body.⁷⁶⁴ Subsequently, the subject hears a noise calling him from outside which resembles a parody of Hamlet’s call from his dead father: “Bang Bang Bla Blak Blud Bugg Bloo” (*U* 15.189). Rudolph, Bloom’s father is resurrected from the dead: “Are you not the son Leopold, the grandson of Leopold? Are you not my dear son Leopold who left the house of his father and left the god of his fathers Abraham and Jacob?” (*U* 15.261-63) Bloom is confronted with the image of the dead ghost that questions his Jewish origin: “I suppose so, father. Mosenthal” (*U* 15.264). Other voices stalk the subject with mirror images of the past as a desire for unity with the past leads to the voice of a talking “Soap”. The soap stands in for the metaphor of change and becoming difference: “We’re a capital couple are Bloom and I: He brightens the earth, I polish the sky” (*U* 15.338-39). Bloom faces multiple frames of past images in being different subjects and the soap stands in as a symbolic cataclysm for his being that becomes an

⁷⁶⁴ Epstein, *Judaism*, p. 246.

endless changing presence in language. The reader becomes aware that the hallucination has begun and the limits to reality have been removed, in the dream scene. Hill notes that being before limits can exceed thought in “limitlessness” which resembles Bloom’s being. Hill argues: “limitlessness is itself inherent in the limit, what it implies is not the lure of an effusive, all-embracing totality, but the rigorous necessity of infinite fragmentation, boundless discontinuity, and endless finitude”.⁷⁶⁵

The subject’s limitless being comes face to face with Marion’s image that is a doubled version of Molly, Bloom’s wife. Indeed, Marion enters the scene as a form of fragmentation of being. She arrives with a camel by her side, which adds comedy to the parody of the Soap talking, now present as an unrealistic character. Marion states: “O Poldy, Poldy, you are a poor old stick in the mud! Go and see life. See the wide world” (*U* 15.329-30). Ironically, it is the world that sees Bloom in the image of the other faces mirrored, because his vision extends outwards in a reversal of positions to all. Bloom’s being starts to fragment in difference, as he mimics the drivelling dog sniffing Marion. The dog in turn parodies his moves while “sniffing” the other subject before him. At this point, Marion disappears from the scene and her presence is replaced by a Bawd with “wolfshining eyes”. Behind the Bawd, Gerty blurts out that Bloom sexually molested her: “You did that. I hate you” (*U* 15.375-76). But Bloom replies: “I When? You’re dreaming” (*U* 15.378). Bloom is accused of doing something outrageously obscene to the girl, whereby the Bawd interrupts the dialogue that seems to be a dream in progress as each images is replaced by a double: “‘For in that sleep of death what dreams may come,’ says Hamlet, ‘when we have shuffled off this mortal coil . . .’ The image, present behind each thing, and which is like the

⁷⁶⁵ Hill, *Blanchot: Extreme Contemporary*, p. 94.

dissolution of this thing and its subsistence in its dissolution”.⁷⁶⁶ Indeed, the blurring the boundary between reality and fiction unfolds in the memory that doubles back again: “Better your mother take a strap to you . . . hussy” (*U* 15.381-82). Moreover, Bloom is depicted as a sneaky soap that frequents brothels as he too shuffles off his moral coil to answer for his infidelity in being. In *A Portrait* Stephen was also called into question for his acts of infidelity after he became obsessed with brothels. The reader is told by Gerty that Bloom is an infidel and pervert. She claims that Bloom “saw all the secrets of my bottom drawer . . . Dirty married man! I love you for doing that to me” (*U* 15.384-85). Like a mirage of images, the Bawd is then replaced by Mrs Breen as her image becomes fragmented again as the scene breaks up into other portraits: “Mr Bloom! You down here in the haunts of sin! I caught you nicely! Scamp! Bloom: (*Hurriedly*) Not so loud my name . . . Mrs Breen: (*Holds up a finger*) now don’t tell a big fib!” (*U* 15.404) Bloom and Mrs Breen retrace the past that is lying in letters of difference. She then accuses the subject of being a farcical joker that tells fiction: “Humbuggering and deluthering as per usual with your cock and bull story” (*U* 15.521). The thought of being accused of deception and lying doubles up in the thought of being at the mercy of different images in different contexts. A dualist ontology is present in the “difference” that is the very definition of identity”.⁷⁶⁷ Furthermore, Mrs Breen and Bloom continue to imagine the past experiences in being as they share several yeses: “Yes, yes, yes, yes, yes, yes, yes” (*U* 15.575). The several “yesses” foreshadows Molly’s response to the betrayal of being before the infidelity of language. Mrs Breen “fades” away as Bloom meanders into difference of dispersal.

Ironically, it is the “Watches” that proceed to call Bloom into question from the exterior, while time and space remove his being towards otherness and difference

⁷⁶⁶ Blanchot, *The Space of Literature*, p. 255.

⁷⁶⁷ See Descombes, *Modern French Philosophy*, pp. 34-36.

which posits the experience of doubling and alterity. Here it is important to recall that in order to liberate being, Blanchot argues that “subversion should constitute the only permanent feature of our life; it should be carried to the highest point”.⁷⁶⁸ Indeed, Bloom responds to the voices that unfold in a subversion of positions of all in one. This begins with the watches that put Bloom on trial: “The Watch: Bloom. Of Bloom. For Bloom. Bloom . . . First Watch: Caught in the act. Commit no nuisance. Bloom: (*Stammers*) I am doing good to others” (*U* 15.680-82). After Bloom points to his friends that fade into the background, the Second Watch accuses Bloom of “cruelty to animals”. The subject begins to describe an earlier scene, whereby, he witnesses his own predicament in the image of the flogged horse. His response marks a detour from the question posed to him, which shows that he is breaking away from the straight line of thought towards a random play of difference to justify his positions. Then, the First Watch interrupts the drama demanding Bloom give his name: “Name and address”. But Bloom states that he can’t remember, thus he gives another name. Here, his name doubles up into difference: “I have forgotten for the moment. Ah, yes . . . Dr Bloom, Leopold, dental surgeon. You have heard of von Bloom Pasha. Umpteen millions. *Donnerwetter!* Owns half Austria. Egypt Cousin” (*U* 15.721-22). Bloom changes his name to a series of different responses, which begs the question is this really Bloom or another character that has entered the scene, or is he mad? Indeed, the subject takes on a mirage of different shades to his character each time he is presented, which appears to be a mad thought, but there is truth in unreason: “For reason, madness is its negative, now as (irruption of irrational forces). An ‘expanded’ reason, toughened by dialectical logic . . . originating in a division between itself and its other, cannot return

⁷⁶⁸ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 224.

to this origin".⁷⁶⁹ Thus, being becomes other. Descombes takes note that the critic's task is to "broaden our reasoning . . . in ourselves and others", hence, the madman "exceeds reason" and the savage "precedes it".⁷⁷⁰ Ironically, Blanchot claims that "everything that is said, everything that is done . . . is ruse, fiction, or illusion and deception".⁷⁷¹ Because language is an "original lack" and a non-origin, being is "lived by another".⁷⁷² However, the other remains unknown and linked to the space of language. Therefore, when the First Watch demands "Proof", Bloom changes the topic as separation shifts his identity into "difference" of the name: "Allow me. My club is the Junior Army and Navy Solicitors" (*U* 15.729-30).⁷⁷³ Ironically, First Watch appears to know the real identity of Bloom that is indeed a fake copy. Indeed, each time language characterises his identity his being shifts the limit of identity to other. He reads: "Henry Flower. No fixed abode. Unlawfully watching and besetting. Second Watch: An alibi. You are cautioned" (*U* 15.736). Funnily enough, after being accused of watching by the watch, Bloom produces a real flower from his pocket to indicate that he is blooming. This act manifests into self-realisation that his own father also changed his name from Virag, meaning flower in Hungarian to another name. Ironically, it is precisely after he is called to the station that Bloom states that he is falsely being accused of a crime that has no truth in it. Furthermore, he sees that no crime committed in the exegesis that demands a response. Thus, injustice is committed from the exteriority of being that puts him on trial from the outside itself.

Bloom now appears to be put on trial in front of a jury that intend to prosecute his being for perjury, which recalls K's judgement in Kafka's *The Trial*: "Someone must have made a false accusation against Josef K., for he was arrested one morning

⁷⁶⁹ Descombes, *Modern French Philosophy*, p. 115.

⁷⁷⁰ Descombes, *Modern French Philosophy*, p. 104.

⁷⁷¹ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 230

⁷⁷² Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 232.

⁷⁷³ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 233.

without having done anything wrong”.⁷⁷⁴ Bloom states that his case is a case of “mistaken identity”, which ironically coincides with his blooming identity that is constantly displaced as an unknown other. It must be pointed out again that his being-in-itself is an “antithesis” that is constantly in question, before “all difference and opposition”.⁷⁷⁵ Indeed, Bloom begs the jury to let him respond, while his presence keeps shifting and sliding under different guises in time: “Gentlemen of the jury let me explain. A pure mare’s nest. I am a man misunderstood. I am being made a scapegoat of. I am a respectable married man, without a stain on my character” (*U* 15.775-77). First Watch disregards Bloom’s statement and demands to know Bloom’s “Regiment” and also “Profession or trade” as the subject’s identity spirals outwards into another paradigm: “Well, I follow a literary occupation. Author journalist. In fact we are just bringing out a collection of prize stories of which I am the inventor. Something that is an entirely new departure” (*U* 15.802-04). Myles Crawford interrupts the scene, while holding a bunch of vegetables in one hand and a phone call in other, which adds “laughable insignification” to the fact that he is a construct: “*dangles a hank of Spanish onions in one hand and holds the other hand with a telephone receiver*” (*U* 15.807-09).⁷⁷⁶ The allusion to a call coming in from the exterior is registered in the off stage directions, which is another reference to the Jewish prophet Elijah. It is important to note that “for Elijah, YHWH was all or nothing, and this dilemma left no place for the worship of any other God”.⁷⁷⁷ Considering Bloom is also referred to as Elijah, the subject is obliged to answer to the call of God. Hence, Myles Crawford begs the question: “Who writes? Is it Bloom?” (*U* 15.813) This question conjures up the problem of knowing the name of the dead

⁷⁷⁴ Franz Kafka, *The Trial*, trans. Idris Parry (Penguin: London, 1994), p. 1.

⁷⁷⁵ Descombes, *Modern French Philosophy*, p. 51.

⁷⁷⁶ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 329.

⁷⁷⁷ Epstein, *Judaism*, p. 39.

author (God) and the problem that afflicts Stephen's being. The question of "who" calls the subject into question is a topic Stephen examines in the library, and a topic Blanchot and Derrida repetitiously return to in relation to language. However, it is interesting to note that Bloom does not ask this question. He simply answers the call as he embodies negativity, while the question of being before the word remains unknown. He sees "the right to language" in the "power to speak" as a "response" to the "thing not to be found" which portrays an inductive way of reasoning linked to his Jewish being.⁷⁷⁸ Here Beaufoy argues that Bloom is a fake, "a plagiarist. A soapy sneak masquerading as a litterateur" (*U* 15.822-23). The relationship Bloom has with the soap shifts his identity to unreality: "It's perfectly obvious that with the most inherent baseness he has cribbed some of my bestselling copy" (*U* 15.823-24). The play becomes a parody in the question and response of the dialectic that differs being.

On reflection, Bloom ignores the comment regarding the act of plagiarism as he has taken his "own nature as object" and "alienated himself in God's name".⁷⁷⁹ Nevertheless, he is still accused of being guilty after "a voice from the gallery" compares his character to the Jewish King Moses: "Moses, Moses, king of the jews, Wiped his arse in the *Daily News*" (*U* 15.847-48). The fact that the myth is made contemporary in the everyday man is a parody that mimics the scene that is redoubled over. Bloom has repeatedly been compared to the holy Messiah and now his daily activity of plagiarism is coupled with images of him performing daily ablutions. It should be noted: "In his first divine call to Moses, God named Himself as the God of the Fathers, the God of Abraham".⁷⁸⁰ Meanwhile, other witnesses are bought to testify against Bloom, while he himself uses newspaper to wipe himself clean. It appears that

⁷⁷⁸ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 255.

⁷⁷⁹ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 247.

⁷⁸⁰ Epstein, *Judaism*, p. 16.

he is redeemed and created in the “transparent sheet” of discourse.⁷⁸¹ Derrida argues that the sheet is a “reappropriation of negativity.”⁷⁸² However, Mary Driscoll proceeds to describe the obscure manner in which the subject “interfered twict” with her “clothing” (*U* 15.887-88). Funnily enough, Bloom is then asked by Georges Fottrell to make a false statement after he is accused of being a plagiarist: “make a bogus statement” (*U* 15.897). The fact that he is asked to make a false statement simply supports a truth, because the materiality of language shows that the word is inauthentic.⁷⁸³ Indeed, Bloom pleads “not guilty” as he holds a blooming flower that is a “fullblown water-lily” while beginning a “long unintelligible speech” of epic dazzling glory (*U* 15.899). We can stop here to note that each accusation is based on the problem of language “imitating”.⁷⁸⁴ Because “the commentator is not being faithful when he faithfully reproduces words, sentences, by the fact that they are cited, they become immobilized and change meaning”.⁷⁸⁵ Accordingly, the discourse is analysed by “Longhand” and “Shorthand” who tell Bloom to “loosen his boots”, while Professor Machugh “coughs and calls . . . Cough it up, man. Get it out in bits” (*U* 15.928). The jury proceed to cross examine Bloom while J. J. O’Molloy states that the criminal is in fact an “infant” experiencing the “rebeginning—the non-origin” while he is “not all there” (*U* 15.955).⁷⁸⁶ It is evident that “lies and falsification” accompany discourse which leads to the mad thought of unreason.⁷⁸⁷ Indeed, the blurring the boundaries between the authentic and fabrication of lies manifests itself further into Bloom’s outbreak of baby talk that present itself in the imagery of fragmented sounds related to pigs meat: “Li li poo lil chile, Bliingee pigfoot evly

⁷⁸¹ Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, p. 55.

⁷⁸² Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, p. 55.

⁷⁸³ Hill, *Radical Indecision*, p. 318.

⁷⁸⁴ Hill, *Radical Indecision*, p. 320

⁷⁸⁵ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 203.

⁷⁸⁶ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 249.

⁷⁸⁷ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 203.

night” (*U* 15.962-64). J. J. O’ Molloy states, Bloom ultimately “wants to go straight” which suggests he wants to come out of the closet and be a non Jew. However, Bloom’s response to this statement is enacted through the images of further fantasy and myth as he imagines Moses Dlugacz holding onto a “pork kidney” (*U* 15.989).

Bloom’s character becomes an ever-expanding blooming identity through separation, displacement, “redoubling” and “difference”.⁷⁸⁸ These transformations manifest through associations of dislocation located from past experiences of “redoubling-repetition” that opens into “rebeginning—the non-origin”.⁷⁸⁹ This act shows that “no experience can claim of itself to be in itself knowledge or truth”.⁷⁹⁰ Indeed, the seemingly different experiences return to an origin that extends back to the problem of genesis. Here too, the displaced deception of the everyday man is presented in the problem of being that has no origin, while Bloom is remade from a ruin in language. The main crime that is constantly questioned is the act of infidelity. Indeed, Bloom is now brought into account for a string of filthy letters of fiction. Hill argues that the treachery of infidelity can be seen in “truth as lying”, due to the roots in the “error” of language.⁷⁹¹ In fact, Mrs Bellingham argues that Bloom tries to morally corrupt her into committing infidelity by adultery. She becomes hysterical when she tells the jury that: “He urged me (stating that he felt it his mission in life to urge me) to defile the marriage bed, to commit adultery at the earliest possible opportunity” (*U* 15.1054-56). The parody in the text is presented by the Honourable Mrs Mervyn Talboy’s accusation against Bloom. She states that the culprit sent her “double envelopes” with an “obscene photo” (*U* 15.1065). So too, Derrida claims: “The mind *purloins*. The *letter*, inscribed propounded speech, is always stolen.

⁷⁸⁸ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 249.

⁷⁸⁹ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 249.

⁷⁹⁰ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 251.

⁷⁹¹ Hill, *Radical Indecision*, p. 315.

Always stolen because it is always open”.⁷⁹² Indeed, Talbot claims that Bloom’s letters suggests she participate in extramarital relations described in the act of “illicit intercourse with a muscular torero” (*U* 15.1068-69). It is evident that the “unreadability” of the letter is the limit of “effacement” to being that can never know who signs the word open to the exterior God.⁷⁹³ Several women confirm Bloom’s promiscuous behaviour as they present secretive “improper letters” to the jury (*U* 15.1078-79). Amidst all of these accusations, Bloom shouts out: “I love the danger . . . I meant only the spanking idea” (*U* 15.1086-1095). This response brings the trial back to the level of comedy as Bloom welcomes the inquisition with a rebuttal of blatant denial. He is told that he will receive a hideous punishment for being deceitful, “the most unmerciful hiding a man ever bargained for” (*U* 15.1099-1100). Ironically, the sadomasochistic torment he receives appears to empower his character as the women “vivisection him”. He is glorified in the act of punishment that reveals that there is no end to his crime or more importantly, to knowing his being in relation to the thought of a secret God. It is evident that every “text” is “haunted” by its own “secret”. Indeed, Hill argues there is an “unreadable shadow” that haunts each text.⁷⁹⁴ This logic shows that Bloom is innocent and the other voices are unjust. Mrs Mervyn Talbot unbuttons his pants, as she intends to “take down his trousers” and flog him in public as the “Timepiece” calls out: “Cuckoo Cuckoo Cuckoo” (*U* 15.1133-35). A serious crime is turned into a farce as the hallucination spirals into a comedy, because each time Bloom is accused of infidelity he responds with difference. He swerves reality and brings the story into another context, which then displaces his being as another fake.

Each time Bloom is called into question for his betrayal before the other subjects, his response reveals that he sees beyond reason. The play of reversal and

⁷⁹² Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, p. 178.

⁷⁹³ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 328.

⁷⁹⁴ Hill, *Radical Indecision*, p. 73.

difference of being embodies the shattering of the universe, which is a part of the limit-experience Blanchot attributes to the fragmentary thought in Nietzsche's writing: "we must shatter the universe, unlearn our respect for the whole".⁷⁹⁵ Indeed, Nietzsche argues that: "We knowers are unknown to ourselves, and for good reason . . . Who we are really? . . . strangers to ourselves".⁷⁹⁶ He concludes that "being is an empty fiction" and "the 'real' world has only been *lyingly added*".⁷⁹⁷ Ironically, the jury unfolds to reveal the Nameless One together with numerous other faces as Bloom is repeatedly called a liar, "bigamist", "cuckold", and a "nuisance" in Dublin (*U* 15.1159-60). The excessive demoralisation leads to the excessive punishment bought forth for lying. It is important to bear in mind Nietzsche's aphorism: "What is truth? A mobile of metaphors, metonyms, and anthropomorphisms—in short, a sum of human relations, which have been enhanced, transposed, and embellished poetically . . . truths are illusions".⁷⁹⁸ But still, the jury seek to punish the criminal just as "The Recorder" threatens to "put an end to this white slave traffic and rid Dublin of this odious pest" (*U* 15.1167). The Recorder states that Bloom should be killed, "hanged by the neck until he is dead" (*U* 15.1170-71). Bloom's confrontation with death by hanging is a parody of Judas' death: "Who'll hang Judas Iscariot? " (*U* 15.1176) Ironically, the thought of death further empowers Bloom, for it is the utmost "limit" to life. Being is always open in language itself. Likewise Blanchot argues, "the beginning of the mind . . . death speaks (the death that is a power) when I speak."⁷⁹⁹ Indeed, the subject responds with a blabbering speech as he upholds difference present in the rubble. His mind reverts back to the past images of death as his memory turns back to retrace his past life: "Wait. Stop.

⁷⁹⁵ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 153.

⁷⁹⁶ Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy and The Genealogy of Morals*, p. 149.

⁷⁹⁷ Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols/ The Anti-Christ*, p. 46.

⁷⁹⁸ Nietzsche, "On Truth and Lie", in *The Portable Nietzsche*, p. 46-47.

⁷⁹⁹ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 42.

Gulls. Good heart. I saw. Innocence. Girl in the monkey house. Zoo. Lewd chimpanzees . . . NO, NO. Pig's feet. I was at funeral" (U 15.1188-1200). This response is an example of Bloom revealing the injustice of the other. But once again Bloom is called a "liar" before Paddy Dingham is resurrected in the face of a beagle dog: "It is true. It was my funeral . . . Bloom, I am Paddy Dignam's spirit. List, list, O list!" (U 15.1218) This parody also resembles Hamlet's father's ghost that haunts the text as a dead author yet again. However, the changing faces of characters contribute to part of the imaginary dream scene for the being that unfolds itself in "metempsychosis". The plurality of viewpoint is signified in the "prolonged applause" coming from Israel: "streamer of legends Cead Mille Faile and Mah Trob Melek Israel" (U 15.1398-1400). A procession of the Irish citizens both living and dead, appear on the imaginary experience, while the unreality of the mass production spirals out to the absurd, just as Bloom is crowned the new hero, King Bloom: "God save Leopold the First! All: God save Leopold the First!" (U 15.1472-75) The image of the King being "executed" is then replaced with the image of him executing "law and mercy" before the unknown space of language, which cuts and binds him apart.

The dialectical movement of reversal and difference keeps on breaking up each act in the text that refers Bloom back to Elijah who is presented in a never-ending image of alterity in the world: "*an infinite invisible tight rope taut from zenith to nadir the End of the World*" (U 15.2176-77). Here, the image of the tightrope walker is a parody of Nietzsche's aphorism of the tightrope walker depicted by Zarathustra. He states that "he promised that there would be a tightrope walker" present in his teaching of the "Overman" after declaring that "God is dead".⁸⁰⁰ Indeed, Zarathustra argues: "Man is something that should be overcome . . . man is a rope,

⁸⁰⁰ Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, p. 43.

fastened between animal and Superman—a rope over an abyss . . . a dangerous wayfaring, a dangerous looking back”.⁸⁰¹ The framed “end of the world” actually speaks out as another voice of the “End of the World” that does not actually happen, because there is no end to becoming difference. Hence being is a “perpetual unfolding, in time, space, and causality” which is in effect an “illusion”.⁸⁰² The being that becomes other, unfolds in the “reversal of direction of the evaluating look, this invariable looking outward instead of inward” and this is a fundamental feature of the Jewish being.⁸⁰³ Clearly, images continue to unfold outwards as being becomes displaced in the exteriority of repetition and difference. Elijah reappears as a comical character who delivers a very dense fragment of riddles. He begins by saying: “No yapping, if you please, in this booth . . . Boys, do it now. God’s time is 12.25. Tell mother you’ll be there . . . Florry Christ, Stephen Christ, Zoe Christ, Bloom Christ, Kitty Christ . . . Be a prism . . . You have something within, the higher self . . . Are you all in this vibration?” (*U* 15.2189-2200) Each of these fragmented images is not related, yet they are part of the entire cosmic history. However, it is possible to compare Zarathustra’s prophecy of the higher man: “shatter their ears to teach them to hear with their eyes”.⁸⁰⁴ This parody forms a panoramic vision for Elijah who shouts: “Big Brother up there . . . hear what I done just been saying” (*U* 15.2217-18). But Big Brother remains silent and off limits in language that keeps quiet: “he twig the whole lot and he ain’t saying nothing” (*U* 15.2223-24). At this point, it becomes apparent that Bloom’s identity is shaped by the sounds of voices. In effect, he always responds to questions with answers that are not directly, but indirectly related to the sounds now throwing questions at him. Therefore, the centre of the question of who is Bloom

⁸⁰¹ Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, p. 43.

⁸⁰² Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy and The Genealogy of Morals*, p. 33.

⁸⁰³ Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy and The Genealogy of Morals*, p. 171.

⁸⁰⁴ Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, p. 45.

is answered by the entire outside in spaces of the exteriority, which is a limitless limit. The words that describe his being are limited in letters, but the characters are endless.

Bloom's trial of judgement can also be compared to Derrida's notion of "monotautological".⁸⁰⁵ The word "monotautological" refers to the imagination that expands into the exteriority through language. Derrida states the "imaginary opens up the position of the I" into a series of limitless-experiences after the subject is called into question.⁸⁰⁶ However, this theory is another name for madness, as the images and symbols separate. Blanchot argues that this revelation is "madness of the universal" idea of being an "eternal return". The return of being in language is different and expands into infinity.⁸⁰⁷ Indeed, Bloom and Virag depict characters merging into infinite characters. Philip Sober declares that "All is not well" (*U* 15.2516). Philip Drunk repeats Stephen's conversation with Deasy as he recalls the Englishman's famous boast is that he paid his way: "I paid my way . . . Reduplication of personality. Who was it told me his name? . . . By the by have you the book, the thing, the ashplant" (*U* 15.2522-38). Zoe then becomes Virag who announces a variety of fragments related to the act of adultery: "I am the Virag who disclosed the sex secrets of monks and maidens. Why I left the Church of Rome. Read the Priest, the Woman and Confessional. Penrose. Flipperty Jippert" (*U* 15.2546-49). The distortion of being as described in the sexual encounter between a man and women presents a fragmented portrait of broken images of letters running into bewilderment. Here voices lead to secret and puzzling sounds: "Woman squeals, bites, spucks. Man, now fierce angry, strikes woman's fat yadgana. (*he chases his tail*) Piffpaff" Popo! (*he stops, sneezes*) Pchp! (*he worries his butt*) Prrrrht!" (*U* 15.2555-56) Bloom's short reply also leads to a secret puzzle: "Poor man!" and "how?" (*U* 15.2564-68). Virag declares that: "He

⁸⁰⁵ Derrida, *Acts of Literature*, p. 300.

⁸⁰⁶ Derrida, *Acts of Literature*, p. 300.

⁸⁰⁷ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 276.

had a father, forty fathers. He never existed. Pig God! He had two left feet. He was Judas Iacchia, a Libyan eunuch, the pope's bastard . . . A son of a whore. Apocalypse" (*U* 15.2572-76). The fragmented imagery adds a further sense of redoubling in the countless images, which repeat over into impressions of difference of the single being that returns. Here the "return" of being in the Nietzschean sense is "always a passage to the limit: the transgression that marks the imperceptible divergence by which knowledge, becoming absolute, would reverse itself into non-knowledge".⁸⁰⁸ Indeed, the "return" of the "drash" or mark in the letter is a repetition of being in "difference". Philip Sober begins to speak in French, which pluralises the situation as he throws the scene into crushed fragments: "*C'était le sacré pigeon, Philippe*" (*U* 15.2585). Not only is the dialogue dense but the hidden commentary in the stage directions is also disjointed. The rearranged signs of distortion branch outward in the limitlessness of being. Virag: "*sticks out a flickering phosphorescent scorpion tongue, his hand on his fork*) Messiah! He burst her tympanum. (*With gibbering baboon's cries he jerks his hips in the cynical spasm*) Hik! Hek! Hak! Hok! Huk! Kok! Kuk!" (*U* 15.2600-03)

Bloom's being continues to uphold disunity, difference and displacement in his "testimony" before the other subjects that punishes him for acting as an estranged Jew. It appears that each sentence is literally an experience of being put on trial. Indeed, each word crosses the being that fails to embody a total image of the subject that appears to fall into a "vertiginous pyramid constructed on a void—a tomb".⁸⁰⁹ At this point, the figure Bello suggests that Bloom is indeed a "eunuch" that lacks being. As such, the subject's constructions of transvaluations cease to apply in the symbolic reference of a return in the question: "It says the impotence of nothingness, we are

⁸⁰⁸ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 271.

⁸⁰⁹ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 394.

still thinking being. Nothing ends, everything begins again”.⁸¹⁰ The subject repeats a tirade of humiliation against Bloom, focusing specifically on his genitals as a means of revealing an excess of being that circles absence. Bello states that: “What else are you good for, an impotent thing like you?” (*U* 15.3127) Bello continues to humiliate Bloom, which is metaphoric of the state of language that fails to justify the acts of deceit and lies spoken without the subject: “It’s as limp as a boy of six’s doing his pooly behind a cart . . . Can you do a man’ job” (*U* 15.3130-32). Bloom retreats back into unreality as he yearns for unity with a home. However, he is uprooted as the fragment of a broken image appears: “Moll. . . We . . . Still . . .” (*U* 15.3151). The mention of the first syllables of Molly’s name ushers in the image of Bloom’s daughter Milly Bloom: “My! it’s Papli” (*U* 15.3171). The sensation of an image slides into the spiral movement flowing outwards as a river image pushes being beyond the boundaries of the scene and further into the exteriority while decentering the question. The river imagery recalls the “Shibboleth, Hebrew word which literally means a fresh-water stream flowing into the sea”.⁸¹¹ However, Caputo notes that the word denotes a “two-edged sword” in reference to translation, which is lost in the untranslatable.⁸¹² This double logic emerges in Bello’s attempt to humiliate Bloom, which shows the two different sides to the subject’s response to being guilty. Thus, Bloom is accused of being a “male prostitute” as Milly disappears into the space of silence (*U* 15.3177). It is important to note that Bloom embodies the “inaccessible” exteriority as the search for his crime continues to “exclude the excluded”.⁸¹³ Indeed, Bloom confesses to a secret that remains hidden: “Memory! I have sinned! I have suff . . .” (*U* 15.3215). The element of absurd appears in the form of “a dark guttural

⁸¹⁰ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 149.

⁸¹¹ Caputo, *The Prayers and Tears of Jacques Derrida*, p. 250.

⁸¹² Caputo, *The Prayers and Tears of Jacques Derrida*, p. 250.

⁸¹³ Caputo, *The Prayers and Tears of Jacques Derrida*, p. 251.

chant” crying out for a return to the original state of being separated for the Jew: “*Shema Israel Adonai Elohenu Adonai Echad*” (*U* 15.3228). At this point, Bloom states that he committed his actions through “force of habit” in reference to the Messiah’s call to the everyday (*U* 15.3243). It is clear, Bloom’s perpetual displacement of being is linked to the idea of being in “exodus” that affirms his dwelling place that “distances himself from it” in separation. Ironically, he takes his separation to another level as he distances his being from the “The Yews” a parody of the “Jews”, calling himself a “perfect pig” as the scene spirals into other experience.

In “Eumaeus”, the narrative structure between the subject Bloom and Stephen returns to a realist conversation and the topic of discussion returns to the central question: “What’s in a name?” (*U* 16.364) When Stephen asks Bloom this question, other voices of sailors enter the scene as the two men continue on their odyssey in search of home. The men encounter a prostitute on the way, which leads to a discussion on the exchange of her trade. This subject is followed by the question of being in relation to God and the question of being. Bloom mirrors Stephen’s questions concerning the nature of authenticity and truth in just relations. He states that: “My belief is, to tell you the candid truth that those bits were genuine forgeries, all of them out in by monks most probably or it’s the big question of our national poet over again, who precisely wrote them like Hamlet” (*U* 16.780-83). Ironically, the answer to Bloom’s commentary leads to the topic of being Jewish. The reader is told that: “I without deviating from plain facts in the least told him his God, I mean Christ, was a jew too and all his family” (*U* 16.1083-84). Bloom then argues that one must question both sides of a relationship. He alludes to an ethical way of thinking of being in relation to a dualist ontology, which he advocates as being the task of the future: “look at both sides of the question. It is hard to lay down any hard fast rules as to right

and wrong but room for improvement all round there certainly is though every country . . . a revolution must come” (*U* 16.1094-101). Bloom defends the Jews who he states are “accused of ruining” whereas the “priests spell poverty” (*U* 16.1119-27). It is clear that a relationship can be examined from both sides, but the problem of knowing which side is right and which side is wrong remains a problem. Here the multiple thought of being shows: “Freedom can be and exist only as negation”.⁸¹⁴ Indeed, Bloom reveals that he is a problem for the community. Even though he responds to the betrayal of being before the thought of infidelity, the testimony of other witnesses shows that in the circular acts of “redoubling and repetition” “there is” in fact a hidden truth, unknown but present in language of the everyday dialogue.

This chapter traced Bloom’s being that was called into question from the other voices that put his being on trial. Indeed, Bloom’s being showed that language in effect is the “the Other—it seizes us, staggers and ravishes us, carrying us away from ourselves. –But precisely in order to change us into Other”.⁸¹⁵ Bloom’s judgement presented before fragmented images showed that his being in relation with language might have possibly been a hallucination, considering Stephen was intoxicated. However, the portraits painted of Bloom revealed more about the other subjects in the community. All of the different voices exposed the problems of conflict in relation to the everyday man that is an outsider even to himself, seen in the “response that philosophy has a right to despair of”.⁸¹⁶ Here Bloom the outsider was criticised by the outside voices for his obsession with unkosher food. Hence, the excessive commentary resulted in a mass of perspectives related to the exteriority of Bloom, rather than the interior of his being. His presence exposed the hypocrisy of other opinions as he became absolutely empowered by the fact that all of the other voices

⁸¹⁴ Descombes, *Modern French Philosophy*, p. 33.

⁸¹⁵ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 51.

⁸¹⁶ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 51.

showed the other sides of the questions posed to him in the face of difference and injustice itself. The betrayal of adultery and infidelity haunted Bloom's being, just as the problem of being in relation to the other "exceeds" the subject.⁸¹⁷ Indeed, the main topic of his questioning in Circe was centred on the problem of infidelity, seen in the ethics of being at "grips with what cannot be grasped".⁸¹⁸ However, Bloom felt no shame when he was put on trial. He was glorified as a hero and king in the face of degradation and humiliation for his infidelity in being. His Jewish being represented change and diversity in the face of perversity that bordered on hysteria. The thought of madness was conjured up in the unrealistic pseudo portraits of otherness. The odyssean journey through the mock experience of being pushed beyond the limits into the limitless realm of being in the hallucinations led to the question of the frailty of the Outside. In turn his being denoted freedom of being akin to difference. In fact, the constant calls from the text could also be seen as one call from God that questioned his being that was judged. Blanchot argues: "All true discourse, Levinas says solemnly, is discourse with God, not a conversation held between equals".⁸¹⁹ Ironically, it was the subjects that put him on trial which were linked to the unknown word. It was evident that the nameless One, led to continuous redoubling for being. This was apparent in the repetition of difference seen in diversity in the face of separation, and fragmentation into infinity. The whole cosmic order was smashed into fragments by Bloom's presence in the face of unreason as he evoked a sense of difference at the limit. He represents the infinite ethical being of creation in becoming "radical exteriority". The next chapter will examine Molly's ethics of being in relation to the infidelity of literature as she searches for an origin lying in language in *Ulysses*.

⁸¹⁷ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 52.

⁸¹⁸ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 55.

⁸¹⁹ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 56.

CHAPTER SIX

The Limit to Presence for Molly in *Ulysses*

“This is the decisive Yes. Presence without anything being present. Through this affirmation, an affirmation that has freed itself from every negation . . . does not answer to ontology any more than to the dialectic, man sees himself assigned—between being and nothingness, and out of the infinite of this between-two that is entertained as relation—the status of his new sovereignty . . . without end of death impossible to die”.⁸²⁰

This chapter will examine Molly’s “being” that confronts the “limit to presence” in relation to the language of the “neuter” in *Ulysses*. Blanchot’s writing on the “limit-experience” will shed light on Molly’s relationship with the neuter that presents the problem of alterity for being that perpetually doubles in light of the deceptive space of language. Indeed her dialogue forms a sequence of events that “unsettle the reader’s habits of regular comprehension”.⁸²¹ Molly’s circular thought processes are composed of her past associations that try to grasp the real lived experience, lost in the fragments of her memory. However as she searches for truth, the disjointed eight sentences coincide with her being in the memory that comes together and breaks apart in the remembrance of forgetting the past. Each act leads to an inauthentic experience of being at the limit to knowledge. As such her memory is reminiscent of Penelope’s tapestry that “weaves” and “unweaves” lies at night.⁸²² In addition the imagery of Molly’s making and breaking a fabric runs in accord with Derrida’s perception of being in the writing of difference that forms a tissue or “textile” cloth.⁸²³ Here Molly’s fabric of being that weaves its own myth is in effect an act of being “under

⁸²⁰ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 209.

⁸²¹ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 30.

⁸²² Killeen, *Ulysses Unbound*, p. 234.

⁸²³ Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, p. xiii.

erasure” in literature.⁸²⁴ The being under erasure mirrors Bloom’s Jewish being that reveals truth to be lying in “literature’s secret” letter.⁸²⁵ It is evident that both subjects face the separation of being before difference that is an act of betrayal, which forms the base of language: “The commentator is not being faithful when he faithfully reproduces; words, sentences, by the fact that they are cited, become immobilised and change meaning”.⁸²⁶ Molly’s failure to find truth in the betrayal of infidelity is represented in her repeated attempts to close the space of difference. Thus, while Molly’s thought takes place in the home, the contents of the thought are encountered in the space of the exteriority. She represents a home without a home present at the limit to experience in the trace of “absence” veiled over in the “trace of its own disappearance”.⁸²⁷ The erasure of the subject’s being shows a doubling act in difference that leads to the thought of “dying” as a voice speaks out in the text. Thus, Blanchot’s notion of the “neuter” will shed light on the “textual veil”⁸²⁸ that comes from beyond the grave and “open” to the “Outside”.⁸²⁹ Indeed, the creative space of language attests to the exegesis of the “absent presence” which “exceeds all law” in the sacred space of the unknown.⁸³⁰ This creative space appears to open up from a circular movement, in the tale retold. This fact returns to the final question of “who” signs the final “yes” in the words that unravel in a circle of being seen from Outside. Whether “Joyce is or is not Molly” a voice comes from “elsewhere” that is in fact the exteriority refusing to be silenced in the language of being before alterity—God.⁸³¹

⁸²⁴ Hill, *Radical Indecision*, p. 231.

⁸²⁵ Hill, *Radical Indecision*, p. 324.

⁸²⁶ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 203.

⁸²⁷ Hill, *Radical Indecision*, p. 231.

⁸²⁸ Brivic, *The Veil of Signs: Joyce, Lacan and Perception*, p. 24.

⁸²⁹ Blanchot, *A Voice from Elsewhere*, p. 69.

⁸³⁰ Hill, *Radical Indecision*, p. 335.

⁸³¹ Derrida, *Acts of Literature*, p. 295.

The ethics of questioning one position over the other has its roots in the first book of creation, the Jewish Talmud. The logic of duality may help us to situate the feminine, creative space that Molly occupies in the text. Her voice stands in relation to the being at the limit to a negative relation that is justified in a reversal of perspectives. According to the Torah, the two opposing principles of life and death lead to justice. In the “Book of Creation” ascribed to Abraham, the writing of “*Sefiroth*” is a principle composed of abstract binaries that represent the kingdom of God’s universe.⁸³² Nadel argues that “the conflation of opposites is a well-known quality of Joyce’s work”.⁸³³ In fact, Bloom’s Jewish being that comes face to face with dialectics of negativity illuminates Joyce’s “expression of his drive to enact what his language unites”.⁸³⁴ It is important to note that Blanchot’s reading of Nietzsche’s interpretation of the Jew and Joyce’s vision of the Jew Greek relates to the question of “being” a part that forms a relation to the “whole”, which is never complete. The whole is composed of two sides in constant relation to the exterior space that divides all relations in time. The tension of the double-edged sword composed of two parts is included in the thought of the *sefiroth*. According to the Talmud, each subject inherits the sexual male and female “dualism” which is broken down to the active and passive role. The opposing principles include “*Chesed*” (Love), the “life-begetting principle” and the other “*Geburah*” (Might) that stands for “justice”.⁸³⁵ From the unison of the two consolations “*Tifereth*” (Beauty) justifies the order of the cosmos.⁸³⁶ In support of this claim, Epstein states that: “It is only by the combination of Love and Justice that the moral order of the universe is assured”.⁸³⁷ This thought denotes “indwelling”

⁸³² Epstein, *Judaism*, p. 227.

⁸³³ Nadel, *Joyce and the Jews*, p. 2.

⁸³⁴ Nadel, *Joyce and the Jews*, p. 2.

⁸³⁵ Epstein, *Judaism*, p. 237.

⁸³⁶ Epstein, *Judaism*, p. 237.

⁸³⁷ Epstein, *Judaism*, p. 237.

which manifests into spoken prayer in the breath of “*alef*”.⁸³⁸ The Hebrew letter *alef* is the “purest element of sacred language”, which testifies to dwelling of the spirit.⁸³⁹ The prayer in breath is also attached to the process of restoration in “judgment” after unity was broken following Adam’s disobedience of God.⁸⁴⁰ Moreover, this thought leads to the constant process of consummation with the broken unity in being that resonates in the process of questioning. Here, Derrida refers to the broken unity in his vision of Molly’s “form of an answer” in the double affirmation of the word “yes”.⁸⁴¹ Her breath attests to the presence of spirit in the final “yes” that answers a call from the Jewish God that remains infinitely absent. It will become apparent that the absence in her dialogue rotates around a presence that exposes the neuter at work. The excess of being before “language that haunts” the other is the Outside:⁸⁴² “nothing can render God more present to us” than “absence” now seen as a “gift” to man.⁸⁴³

In his writings on “The Dwelling”, Levinas describes the subject’s being that is both placed and displaced in the life—death of “language”, which he names “home”.⁸⁴⁴ He, like Blanchot, explores the possibility of being before a “hidden God” that is tied to the dialectic in question, which returns to the final question, the question of being before God, as being is housed in language.⁸⁴⁵ Being is perceived as divided in the dialectic that harbours a separation of being. The interior and exterior division in the interiority of the home for being is “actualized” in “labour” through language. Through “recollection of memory” the home is “nourished” and “produced” in the

⁸³⁸ Epstein, *Judaism*, p. 239.

⁸³⁹ Fishbane, Eitan, P, “The Speech of Being, the Voice of God: Phonetic Mysticism in the Kabbalah of Asher Ben David and His Contemporaries”, *The Jewish Quarterly Review*, Vol. 98, No. 4 (2008), p. 493.

⁸⁴⁰ Epstein, *Judaism*, p. 141.

⁸⁴¹ Hill, *Radical Indecision*, p. 319.

⁸⁴² Blanchot, *A Voice from Elsewhere*, p. 11.

⁸⁴³ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 117.

⁸⁴⁴ Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, p. 152.

⁸⁴⁵ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 15.

“void” of being.⁸⁴⁶ The self in the home of the “I” is separated by language that occupies being as an “other” material form. Levinas names “desire” as the driving force in being. Here the subject is composed in the binary of opposition of masculine and feminine. Running in accord with Levinas’ notion of “desire”, Blanchot rethinks the “poetic desire” between being and language in terms of “presence and absence”.⁸⁴⁷ Hence, Blanchot attributes the sacred “opening of being” to the “immediate presence” of speech that is articulated in the “lack” in being.⁸⁴⁸ Thus, the metaphor used to depict the lack in the home of being is a “fragmentary disposition” in the being “I without I”.⁸⁴⁹ However, Levinas proceeds to describe the encounter of desire in terms of “habitation”.⁸⁵⁰ His theory of the feminine space returns to the problem of being created from nothing. He claims that the subject seeks to recapture an essence prior to speech that veils the essence of being that is essentially a “lack”. Levinas argues: “The woman is the condition for recollection, the interiority of the Home, the inhabitation”.⁸⁵¹ Levinas stipulates that the “woman” can be “reversed so as to open up the dimension of interiority”⁸⁵² Woman is metaphorically represented as an abstract feature of being that dwells inside the home regardless of gender:⁸⁵³ “To exist henceforth means to dwell”.⁸⁵⁴ Presence manifests itself in the creative womb of words that are connected with the feminine aspect of birth in the breath of the spirit. This characterisation answers for the absence present of the “I without I” that remains. Derrida pays tribute to Nietzsche for rethinking the creative exigency in terms of “pregnancy” as he too theorises the “woman” as a “gift”, which unveils “truth” in

⁸⁴⁶ Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, p. 154.

⁸⁴⁷ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, pp. 38-39.

⁸⁴⁸ Hill, *Blanchot: Extreme Contemporary*, p. 84.

⁸⁴⁹ Blanchot, *A Voice from Elsewhere*, p. 13.

⁸⁵⁰ Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, p. 152.

⁸⁵¹ Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, p. 155.

⁸⁵² Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, p. 155.

⁸⁵³ Roughley, *Reading Derrida Reading Joyce*, p. 84. Roughley suggests that Derrida’s reading of Molly’s repetition of yes “operates beyond gender”, where reading affirms presence of “what is”.

⁸⁵⁴ Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, p. 156.

“writing”.⁸⁵⁵ Yet for Blanchot, Levinas and Derrida, the metaphor of the home does not ground possession, because the space in which the feminine seduces is a shadowy dream that covers being with a veil of truth:⁸⁵⁶ “There is no such thing as essence”, there is only language that is exchanged in the lack in desire in the space of difference itself.⁸⁵⁷ From this perspective the lack returns to the question of God, “who” creates.

In “Penelope”, Molly responds to the question of being, which marks the first stage of the limit-experience with the word “Yes” as she enters into a dialogue with the exteriority: “Yes because he did a thing like that before” (U 18:1). Molly’s experience with language begins with a return to the scene experienced “before” with Bloom making breakfast for her, hence a repetition. This memory is reminiscent of the first portrait painted in the home earlier in the day, by Bloom. However, second time round, the menu has changed, as day has turned to night in the “circular reappropriation” of difference that copies the previous experience.⁸⁵⁸ Because the sentence proceeds to continue beyond the scope of a normal breath, the reader realises that in order for meaning to exist one has to analyse the text in fragments, while inserting the missing pauses and breaks of punctuation. Thus, the reader is presented with a glimpse into a fragment of a part of Molly’s experience with language that reads like a flood of “continuous speech”.⁸⁵⁹ However, the flood fails to retain the entirety of the lived experience. It is important to note that the excess of information that presents itself in the veil of the “real” is something the mind cannot process unless it is discontinuous. Thus, it is the discontinuous fragments of language that ground being in things imaginary. Indeed, Blanchot argues that Joyce “disrupts our

⁸⁵⁵ Jacques Derrida, *Spurs*, trans. Barbara Harlow (London: The University of Chicago Press, 1997), p. 123.

⁸⁵⁶ See Brivic, *The Veil of Signs*. Brivic applies Lacan’s theory of the “unconscious desire of the Other” to Joyce’s oeuvre. In effect, he makes a claim that language is a “veil” that shrouds the real experience.

⁸⁵⁷ Derrida, *Spurs*, p. 51.

⁸⁵⁸ Derrida, *Acts of Literature*, p. 302.

⁸⁵⁹ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 9.

manner of reading”, because “the mind, with its measured and methodical gait, cannot stand up to the immediate intrusion of the totality of the real”.⁸⁶⁰ Therefore, because Molly’s soliloquy is placed in inverted commas that runs into continuity, her speech hides in the veil that searches for unity with totality and this is an impossible feat. Indeed, it is not possible for the mind to grasp the whole picture of perception apart from framed images in language, which are broken down into fragments. Blanchot notes that this discourse is a “surrealist ambition”, yet it also exemplifies Molly’s “search for immediation”.⁸⁶¹ The discontinuity in the text reveals a problematic of being in Molly’s dialogue that reveals a “different relation” to an imperfect “human structure”.⁸⁶² Language is ethically imperfect, because of the gaps of missing images associated with the woven thought process, and also because language itself is an inauthentic supplement to the real. Indeed, Derrida states: “If *text* [*texte*] means cloth tissue: the word *texte* is derived from the Latin *textus*, meaning cloth (*tissu*), and from *texere*, to weave (*tisser*); in English we have *text* and *textile*”.⁸⁶³ Derrida’s reading of the text can be compared to Molly’s dialogue that recalls Penelope “sewing on the outside which does not bind the textile tightly” no matter how many times she repeats her story.⁸⁶⁴ Her being begs to know “what is” lying in the “initial void” of the text.⁸⁶⁵

Molly’s negative account of being in relation to Bloom’s Jewish being unfolds itself in a circular movement of “turning” and “slipping away” from the real in language.⁸⁶⁶ Bloom’s interest in other women such as Mrs Riordan manifests itself into signs of negative thought. Molly’s dialectics overturns one image with the negative counterpart in her search of a truth. Her thoughts unfold in a “movement

⁸⁶⁰ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 9.

⁸⁶¹ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 9.

⁸⁶² Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 9.

⁸⁶³ Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, p. xiii.

⁸⁶⁴ Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, p. xiii.

⁸⁶⁵ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 9.

⁸⁶⁶ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 23.

turning in a circle”, while she recalls Bloom’s being as the “soul” of the “greatest miser” that “ever was actually”.⁸⁶⁷ She then compares her being with the other women that were not “her sort”, as she measures her relation with difference in others (*U* 18.9). Her dialectics of negativity leads her to imagine herself as another being that is the excluded counterpart facing a positive image. She notes that she will “never be like her” even if she has positive traits of being a “welleducated women” (*U* 18.12-13). Molly’s thought process turns from Mrs Riordian to Mr Riordian as she now examines the husband’s relationship to the wife: “I suppose he was glad to get shut of her and her dog smelling my fur” (*U* 18.14-15). Molly’s memory searches for answers in regard to her relation to Bloom as she questions other spouses. Indeed, she remembers the man chasing her in the play: “always edging to get up under my petticoats” (*U* 18.15). Her enquiry into Mr Riordian’s relations return back to her own being that responds with an affirmation: “Id have to dring it into him for a month yes” (*U* 18.19-20). Her thought then turns back to infidelity as she doubts Mrs Riordian’s faith: “shes as much a nun as I’m not yes” (*U* 18.22). Her mind continues to spiral out and coil as she separates the image of Mrs Riordian from her being that reverts back to her presence that is part of a relation to “all” other women: “I was sick then wed see what attention only of course the woman hides it not to give all the trouble” (*U* 18.33-34). Indeed, Molly’s presence hides under a veil in the memory as she occupies Bloom’s external space as she speaks by way of the other. She states that “love its not”, because Bloom was “flirting” and he told a “pack of lies” about “those women . . . who else . . . who else let me see” (*U* 18.37-40). It is ironic that she calls him a liar as she weave words from secondary sources linked to the textual infidelity.

⁸⁶⁷ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 15.

Hill notes that “infidelity, it seems, is an unavoidable condition of all commentary”.⁸⁶⁸ This argument supports Blanchot’s claim that “a commentator . . . is not being faithful when he faithfully reproduces, the words or sentences he quotes, by the very fact of being quoted”.⁸⁶⁹ The thought of infidelity in relation to words can now be seen in light of lies told and the “falsification” of “words” that “become immobilized and change meaning”.⁸⁷⁰ Not only is Bloom a liar but Molly is also engaged in an act of infidelity. Here she negates her being that occupies the space of the inauthentic other corpse of being in relation to language. This problematic unfolds as she begins to “efface herself” in the acts of judgement, as she continues to question her being.⁸⁷¹

The subject’s negative desire for unity in “being” spirals outwards into a “redoubling” movement, as “infinite separation becomes union with the infinite” thought.⁸⁷² Indeed, Molly’s mind accumulates different impressions of Bloom’s misbehaviour as she moves further away from the real truth in the act searching for a real origin. Heath’s theory of the “spiral” structure is prevalent in Molly’s being that shows a “return and disengagement” from the real truth in “the process of this interrogation”.⁸⁷³ This is evident in Molly’s suspicious mind that rips up and doubles back into the thought of infidelity: “some little bitch or other he got in with somewhere or picked up on the sly if they only knew him as well as I do yes” (*U* 18.45-46). Here we can stop to note that Molly’s memory begins to double over into a repetition of experience as she begins to repeat Bloom’s experience. The sense of repetition is the base for the disengagement, but a return with a difference. Here: “Language lends itself to the movement of stealing and turning away . . . steals away

⁸⁶⁸ Hill, *Blanchot: Extreme Contemporary*, p. 160.

⁸⁶⁹ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 203.

⁸⁷⁰ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 203.

⁸⁷¹ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 108

⁸⁷² Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 104.

⁸⁷³ Heath, “Ambiviolences”, in *Post-Structuralist Joyce*, p. 47.

steals away profoundly”.⁸⁷⁴ Indeed, she confronts his image as a mirror reflection woven back in the presence that is “man that being is what steals away”.⁸⁷⁵ The act of betrayal resurfaces when she recalls Bloom “scribbling” a secret “letter” and hiding it from her. She clearly recognises his sly behaviour, yet she does not confront him directly about his deceitful acts that resurface in the dream. She then begins to describe his fetish for “kissing” her “bottom” which is his secret passion. This thought spirals out to another secret unknown lover that he keeps hidden from her. She states that she would prefer him neither to conceal himself nor hide: “hide it not that I care two straws now who he does it with” (*U* 18.53-54). Ironically, Molly declares that she would like to know if Bloom has a lover, so that she can avoid the game of hide and seek that is going on between the two infidels: “Id like to find out so long as I don’t have the two of them under my nose all the time” (*U* 18.54-55). Evidently, Molly’s relationship with Bloom is an open relationship that has a secret code, whereby they both know that each other is committing adultery, but neither actually confronts the other directly. Each other accept this fact, which shows that this behaviour is justifiable in marriage that forms no unity, in the self and other relationship. This fact exposes the scandalous institution of marriage that cannot unite a couple due to the “fecundity” of language seen as fiction.⁸⁷⁶ Thus, the subject’s relation is constantly in negation with a third party. Nevertheless, Molly still gets jealous of particular woman such as Mary, as she recalls her flirting with Bloom: “that slut Mary we had in Ontario terrace padding out her false bottom to excite him” (*U* 18.56-57). Here, the subject recognises that Bloom’s desire is insatiable for she cannot fulfil his desire in the lack in being. She states: “1 woman is not enough for them”. Indeed, she suspects

⁸⁷⁴ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 23.

⁸⁷⁵ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 23.

⁸⁷⁶ Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, p. 301.

Bloom has a hidden lover “something on with that one” (*U* 18.60-65). Molly is obsessed with Bloom’s faithless gaze that mirrors her own acts of infidelity in theory.

Molly proceeds to speak with a repetition of commentary that is focused on the deceptive nature of adultery in language. Indeed, the subject continues to put the self into question as she encounters fabrication in “an essential lack from which this right to put himself in question, and always in questions comes”.⁸⁷⁷ Molly confesses that she “wouldn’t lower” herself “to spy on them the garters I found in her room” (*U* 18.68). Her desire to get to an original truth is envisaged in her search for an origin in the text that clearly “becomes a process of weaving backwards and forwards”.⁸⁷⁸ She then questions Bloom’s inauthenticity as she calls him a “dirty barefaced liar and sloven” (*U* 18.74). Hill argues that the only way to “respond faithfully to a text” is to respond to “that which is most repetitive in it”.⁸⁷⁹ Indeed, Molly’s repetitive “displacements” of Bloom’s secret sex life “constitutes the text’s peculiar signature” in the problem of being faithful. Indeed, she tries to fulfil her desire in her parody of his infidelity. However, Molly has no doubt that Bloom is filling his desire elsewhere as she reinterprets his scandalous actions: “he couldn’t possibly do without it that long so he must do it somewhere” (*U* 18.76-77). Her desire then retraces her last sexual experience back to Bloom’s presence as she unravels the image of “the last time he came” on her “bottom when was it the night Boylan gave . . . a great squeeze” (*U* 18.77-78). It is apparent that while there is no actual sexual intercourse between Molly and Bloom, the sexual practice of him repeatedly coming on her bottom becomes an obsession that Molly critiques in her act of renunciation. Her enunciation has a transforming effect “in thought by textuality itself”.⁸⁸⁰ Ironically, the thought of

⁸⁷⁷ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 205.

⁸⁷⁸ Killeen, *Ulysses Unbound*, p. 235

⁸⁷⁹ Hill, *Blanchot: Extreme Contemporary*, p. 161.

⁸⁸⁰ Hill, *Blanchot: Extreme Contemporary*, p. 161.

repetition in intertextuality is carried over into the image of Bloom's repetitious acts of "wearing the same old hat" (*U* 18.84). So too, Molly claims that she would like "some young boy to do it" for her because she "cant do it herself" (*U* 18.85). This confession suggests that Bloom is unable to fulfil his wife's sexual desire. Thus, he seeks to replace his image with another part of the incomplete text. While he fails to fulfil her desire, he tries to satisfy his desire by masturbating as Molly talks to him about having sex with other men: "doing that frigging drawing out the thing . . . would you do this and the other with the coalman yes with a bishop yes" (*U* 18.88-90). The sexual experience envisaged in the act of betrayal is doubly deceptive in the supplement to language. Indeed, masturbation appears to estrange the married couple, because of the lack of intimacy. Derrida also argues that masturbation is "acting thought the hand of the other".⁸⁸¹ He states "that dangerous supplement" is in effect language that enacts a "play of substitution", which "fills and marks a determined lack" in "nature".⁸⁸² Thus, the pair engages in the scandal of corruption as "the sign, the image, or the represented" play out the movement of substitution in language.⁸⁸³

The "pressing form of this questioning" takes a "detour" for Molly in the search for an answer in her commitment to marriage.⁸⁸⁴ She begs to know: "why cant you kiss a man without going and marrying him first you sometimes love to wildly" (*U* 18.102-03). The remembrance of the "kiss" recalls the unity she felt when she first met Bloom: "theres nothing like a kiss long and hot down to your soul" (*U* 18.105-06). In the reoccurring image of breath in life, truth of presence is resurrected in the immediate experience, which stands in contrast to the written formation of the letter. Molly's being appears to purify herself in renunciation as she makes a confession to

⁸⁸¹ Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, p. 147.

⁸⁸² Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, p. 157.

⁸⁸³ Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, p. 147.

⁸⁸⁴ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 301.

Father Corrigan about her first sexual experience. Indeed, she declares that “he touched me father and what harm if he did where and I said on the canal bank” (*U* 18.107-08). The subject implicitly recalls the sequence of events that lead up to her sinful act before marriage: “where and I said on the canal bank like a fool but whereabouts on your person my child on the leg behind high up was it yes rather high up was it where you sit down yes” (*U* 18.108-09). Molly doubts the act of confession to the priest, as she questions the real experience of communicating with a real God. Ironically, she finds that her confession to the hidden God is just: “did you whatever way he put it I forget no father and I always think of the real father what did he want to know for when I already confessed it to God” (*U* 18.111-13). Molly’s speech diverts from the invisible to the visible as she turns her attention to the priests “nice fat hand” (*U* 18.114). Here the priest’s presence acts as another substitute for the real lived experience: “the supplement supplements. It adds only to replace. It intervenes or insinuates itself in-the-place-of; if it fills, it is as if one fills a void”.⁸⁸⁵ Her sexual desire for unity leads her to ponder on the thought of what it would be like to feel his hand, which shows that the “supplement produces no relief” in the “mark of an emptiness” in being.⁸⁸⁶ Indeed, Molly begins to question if the priest can recognise her presence from the confession box that is a “scandal”.⁸⁸⁷ She keeps on digging into her past backwards and further into acts of infidelity: “no danger with a priest if youre married” (*U* 18.120). She then questions Bloom’s reason for slapping her bottom, as she compares herself to other creatures: “I wonder was he satisfied with me one thing I didn’t like his slapping me behind . . . Im not a horse or an ass” (*U* 18.121-23). The subject doubts if she is dreaming or being dreamed up, because Molly’s negative thought succumbs to the lack in being, which shows that there is an absent presence

⁸⁸⁵ Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, p.145.

⁸⁸⁶ Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, p.145.

⁸⁸⁷ Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, p.147.

speaking in the text: “I wonder is he awake thinking of me or dreaming am I in it” (*U* 18.124-25). The subject is led along a path where she has no power over the simulacrum “inscribed” at the “limit of effacement . . . albeit in negative fashion”.⁸⁸⁸

The subject’s memory proceeds to circle around “the truth that progresses in this way extricates and unfolds itself, or else closes around its own centre”.⁸⁸⁹ Indeed, Molly’s memory turns back to Bloom’s lack in desire, while she recollects the image of a flower given to her. Here the image of the flower is metaphoric of her blooming identity that keeps on expanding towards the exterior as she digs into an absent centre. Molly confesses that she “picks apart” and “mercilessly” dissects Bloom’s being that faces her as other.⁸⁹⁰ Moreover, she affirms that he has no centre in his being: “he never goes to church mass or meeting he says your soul you have no soul inside only grey matter because he doesn’t know what it is to have one” (*U* 18.141-43). Ironically, Molly keeps questioning Bloom as she judges her own boundaries, where she exists. However, Bloom’s faces of different images reveal that there is no end to his empty presence, which keeps on sliding beneath the arbitrary “signifier” of being.⁸⁹¹ Because Bloom does not have any boundaries that adhere to a monogamous relationship, Molly follows Bloom’s lack in desire. Consequently, she engages in extramarital relations whether they are merely encouraged in a fantasy scenario or not. Here it is important to note that there is a breakdown between the real and the imaginary. Essentially, Molly takes Bloom’s fantasies and makes them a reality as she initiates action through discourse. This fact leads her mind to fantasise about Boylan’s penis, which she describes in detail. Clearly, the object that stands in relation to her being is a threat to her own femininity: “he must have come 3 or 4 times with that tremendous

⁸⁸⁸ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 329.

⁸⁸⁹ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 333.

⁸⁹⁰ Killeen, *Ulysses Unbound*, p. 328.

⁸⁹¹ Brivic, *The Veil of Signs: Joyce, Lacan, and Perception*, p. 27.

big red brute of a thing he has I thought the vein or whatever the dickens they call it was going to burst” (*U* 18.143-45). However, the imagery associated with the giant genitals mirrors the dialogue that flows out in excess: “the size of that to make you feel full up . . . with a big hole in the middle of us like a Stallion driving it up into you” (*U* 18.150-53). While Boylan appears to fulfil Molly’s sexual desire in comparison to Bloom’s presence, there is still a mark of separation between them as she searches for an origin in the spoken word fails to grasp the real “thing”. Thus, “absence of truth is the very secret of the narrator, because truth is lost” literally as truth is “lying beyond the limits of language”.⁸⁹² Truth is “anything but a secret”.⁸⁹³ This fact brings the reader before an ethical problem to being before a turning point. Here being repetitiously forgets that it exists in relation to an unknown “form of alterity”.⁸⁹⁴ Indeed, the subject’s presence falls into an abyss as her voice spirals out.

It is apparent that Molly’s being that is called into question is recreated by the space of the exterior, as her memories recollect images of a double. Essentially, the origin of her being presents itself in the space of language. So too Blanchot notes, “language has a certain constitutive power, one must immediately add that it is the speaking subject itself”.⁸⁹⁵ Ironically, this process is undermined once being reverses its position with the lack in language. This is apparent as Molly begins to compare Boylan’s fetish of her feet with Bloom’s absence: “theyre all so different Boylan . . . Poldy” (*U* 18.246-48). The past is unmaking Molly and the present is recreating her memory in the dialogue that redoubles in the repetition.⁸⁹⁶ Indeed, the subject’s mind forgets as it remembers the past that is remade in the act of destruction and recreation:

⁸⁹² Hill, *Blanchot: Extreme Contemporary*, p. 150.

⁸⁹³ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 333.

⁸⁹⁴ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 251.

⁸⁹⁵ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 251.

⁸⁹⁶ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 249.

“the essence of memory is therefore forgetting”.⁸⁹⁷ Each act of recollection is formed in separation and destruction of the lived experience, as the past imagination falls into an abyss. Therefore, the twofold movement of becoming is a limit-experience, because the subject in language “now represents. It does not exist, but functions”.⁸⁹⁸ In addition, Molly’s commentary on the infidelity of language unfolds in her recollection of Boylan’s foot fetish seen “in a place like that” doubles into a desire to “take” Bloom and “show him the very place too we did it so now there you are like it or lump it” (*U* 18.280-81). Molly’s willingness to expose the betrayal of language shows that she does not know everything. Thus, her thoughts shift in the “murmuring orality, as a personal ‘self’” that begins to disappear in the dialogue of infidelity.⁸⁹⁹ From Boylan and back to Bloom, Molly recalls Bloom’s fetish for her “drawers” as she goes on to rename him “slyboots” just as “the echoes of his speech, give rise to intrigue” (*U* 18.297). The word “yes” is repeated as she recalls Bloom’s desire for her to allow him to “put his hand anear me drawers drawers” (*U* 18.304-05). Yet, here the “yes” can be seen as a testimony to Blanchot’s notion of being at the limit: “only vocal speech relates to the sovereign logos”.⁹⁰⁰ The subject remembers her desire to know whether or not Bloom was circumcised, as she searches for an origin: “I was dying to find out was he circumcised he was shaking like a jelly all over they want to do everything” (*U* 18.315-16). The traditional Jew is circumcised on the 8th day after birth and is a symbolic and ethical reminder that being is cut from God. Ironically, Molly then recalls the “8 big poppies” given to her by Bloom who is uncircumcised, which coincide with the eighth day allocated for Jewish circumcision. Indeed, this fact represents the eight stages of her tryst remembered in the space of the exterior, as

⁸⁹⁷ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 315.

⁸⁹⁸ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 257.

⁸⁹⁹ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 257.

⁹⁰⁰ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 257.

being remains open. Her mind relentlessly searches for the moment prior to the word that embodies the virginal moment of truth experienced in the images shuffling past. Here language approaches nudity of the untouchable vertigo of virginal femininity.⁹⁰¹

Molly's "voluptuosity"⁹⁰² of infidelity and betrayal continues to be reconciled in her words of repentance and prayer as she tries to justify her "betrayal".⁹⁰³ She declares that since she is always at the receiving end of the sexual experience, she may as well take it in different positions, because this is Bloom's fantasy: "always having to lie down for them better for him put it into me from behind the way Mrs Mastiansky told me her husband made her like the dogs do it and stick out her tongue" (*U* 18.416-18). Molly now appears to reduce herself to a submissive position with a passive nature, even though she seems to want to take control. She does not as she allows the language to govern her body, as her memory is making and unmaking her being in the process of repetition and rejuvenation. It is evident that the voice that speaks "situates itself nowhere" but in the "space of redoubling. It is an echo and resonance where it is not someone, but rather this unknown space".⁹⁰⁴ The embryonic dialogue that has a "non-origin" portrays Molly's "symptomatic body" of the "wound that cries out" in the text.⁹⁰⁵ The wound imagery is associated with the being that is a "tear" that cuts through time for the subject in the "imaginary experience".⁹⁰⁶ Indeed, Molly imagines the other silently breaking her being apart during anal sex: "quiet and mild with his tingating". The subject questions the language that destroys her being as it becomes other: "can you ever be up to men" (*U* 18.420). Clearly, Molly's mind comes together and breaks apart in a "doubling and recrossing" direction from sexual

⁹⁰¹ Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, pp. 262-265.

⁹⁰² Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, p. 264.

⁹⁰³ See Alan Roughley, *James Joyce & Critical Theory* (Michigan: The University of Michigan Press, 1992), p. 149. Roughley points out Cixous claims that "betrayal" is the "breath" of "Joyce's subject".

⁹⁰⁴ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 258.

⁹⁰⁵ Van Boheemen-Saaf, *Joyce, Derrida, Lacan, and the Trauma of History*, pp. 20-25.

⁹⁰⁶ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 259.

to non-sexual recollections as she questions positions.⁹⁰⁷ Her memory then turns to the division she sees existing between men and women, as she continues to search for truth in being. She states: “the world is divided in any case if its going to go on” (*U* 18.437-38). Molly recognises God’s presence, as she begins to call him into question as a means of justifying her claim. She affirms that God knows the truth, because he has secretly seen her from the exteriority of being. He is a silent witness to her infidelity and betrayal: “God only knows whether he did after all I said to him” (*U* 18.461). Her thoughts gather as they accumulate impressions of her past recollections with Bloom who is perverted, as she too becomes a creation of her myth. The erasure of language crosses the being that in effect dies and is reborn in the difference that is language. Indeed, she starts to imagine death, as she fears the prospect of dying as other: “I suppose Ill have to wash in my piss” (*FW* 18.462). Her mind returns to Bloom’s image of being in difference as she recalls “him being insulted” after she remembers that she is still “his wife”. The final words of the second sentence end midstream as a question opens up to ask “what”: “Im sure you were” (*U* 18.534). This break in the flow of weaving the cloth of textual interconnections establishes the logic of fragmentation in being. Her being at that limit breaks up midstream as limits move.

In the third sentence, Molly’s thought process continues to be focused on her body that is a fragment of a part of her relations to the exterior. Indeed, she remembers that Bloom’s “sucking” her “titties” makes then “a bit firmer” (*U* 18.535). The erotic imagery proceeds as she declares that her breasts represent a sign of beauty and power. Bloom suggested that she pose naked for a wealthy patron, “some rich fellow in Holles street when he lost the job” (*U* 18.560-61). However, her mind takes a detour or slip again as she breaks up images of lost experience that return back to

⁹⁰⁷ Van Boheemen-Saaf, *Joyce, Derrida, Lacan, and the Trauma of History*, p. 55.

Bloom's presence in search of an original truth. However, truth is found to be missing from the text as she encounters fragments of forgery reminiscent of others calling Bloom's Jewish being into question. She recalls his "jawbreakers about the incarnation he never can explain a thing simply the way a body can understand" (*U* 18.566-67). Her body is speaking out in the text's margins as a dimension of recovery in the space of silence that points towards the limit-experience as being "finds itself at grips with what always steals it away from thought".⁹⁰⁸ Ironically, Molly declares that she has difficulty remembering her past. She confesses that if she could "remember the 1 half of the things and write a book out of it the works of Masters Poldy" (*U* 18.579-80). Moreover, her dialogue with Bloom depicts a book within the book, as a separate text, unwoven by Bloom that stands in the subtext. Thus, he can be seen as Molly's absent presence that winds outwards in a stream of images with no centre: "a hole-word, hollowed out in its centre by a hole, the hole . . . buried".⁹⁰⁹ In effect, her memory is consumed with her lover's absence that becomes a presence. She proceeds to imagine: "his mouth O Lord I must stretch myself I wished he was here or somebody to let myself go with and come again like that I feel all fire inside me or if I could dream it" (*U* 18.584-86). Molly's desire for unity with her other lover's presence reaches a limit-experience as the dialogue confronts the limits of language's own limits. She proceeds to describe her sexual experience with the other after he tickles her "from behind with his finger" as Molly comes for "about 5 minutes" with "her legs round him" (*U* 18.586-87). The subject recalls that she "wanted to shout out all sorts of things fuck or shit or anything at all only not to look ugly" (*U* 18.588-89). This limit-experience can be compared to Bataille's "inner experience" that surrenders meaning as "NON-KNOWLEDGE COMMUNICATES ECSTASY" in

⁹⁰⁸ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 272.

⁹⁰⁹ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 385.

absence.⁹¹⁰ Boylan and Molly do not communicate during the sexual act as both lovers remain silent. Molly then puts her “tongue between” her “lips” and Boylan “doesn’t talk” (*U* 18.592-93). The silence presents the “impasse” or “absence of truth” in “ineliminabe excess”.⁹¹¹ Excess manifests itself in the “unworking” slippage that cannot be accounted for in the text. Blanchot names this “negativity without employ” a term derived from Bataille’s theory of the inner-experience.⁹¹² Molly faces negation that has “nothing more to negate” as she experiences erasure in the self-effacing discourse.⁹¹³ Erasure reaches a pinnacle in “an empty gong”⁹¹⁴ where breath resounds in the unknown voice that bears witness to “infinite affirmation” of speech’s gift.⁹¹⁵

The fourth sentence begins with the sound of a train whistling the word “frseeeeeeeefronnnng” as the experience breaks up into fragments of “limitlessness limit” experience for Molly (*U* 18.596).⁹¹⁶ Hill argues that limits “obey a disconcerting and duplicitous logic”.⁹¹⁷ The limit that falls into limitlessness is “inherent in the limit”, which is in the structure of framing. This bizarre logic attests to a thought seen in the fact that limits move.⁹¹⁸ Indeed, while there is no connection between no full stop at the end of the last sentence and the missing capital letter at the beginning of the new sentence, the image of the sound in the train swiftly runs into the repetition of memory that exceeds limits in Molly’s return back to “Loves old sweeeetsonnnng” (*U* 18.598). Her memory recollects images of men working on engines as her mind searches for an origin in the disunity of her being that experiences language as other. Molly’s mind races past the image of Gibraltar through

⁹¹⁰ Bataille, *Inner Experience*, p. 52.

⁹¹¹ Hill, *Blanchot, Extreme Contemporary*, p. 106.

⁹¹² See Bataille, *Inner Experience*, pp. 1-10.

⁹¹³ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 205.

⁹¹⁴ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 385.

⁹¹⁵ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, pp. 212-13.

⁹¹⁶ Hill, *Blanchot: Extreme Contemporary*, p. 93.

⁹¹⁷ Hill, *Blanchot: Extreme Contemporary*, p. 93.

⁹¹⁸ Hill, *Blanchot: Extreme Contemporary*, p. 93.

to adolescence while “shifting perspectives” of a “myriad of subjects”, recollect the “tea” she drank with friends, the “currant scones” she ate, while she comes face to face with another letter.⁹¹⁹ Here she searches for the truth lost in the images of the first love letter as she yearns for unity with the first virginal recollection that appears to be a haunting limitless experience. Sexual desire shifts back to the question of being in the self portrait of an inner examination as she states that Captain Grove was “awfully fond” of her as he used to “break his heart” over her beauty (*U* 18.634). Her mind spirals outwards rapidly moving at a faster pace from image to image as she tries to grasp “Hester” and the “Alamenda esplanade” when she was with “father” and “Captain Grove” (*U* 18.644). The effect of being before the reflection of the church windows reveal an uncanny experience of doubling: “I felt something go through me like all needles my eyes were dancing I remember after when I looked at myself in the glass hardly recognised myself the change” (*U* 18.646-48). The self that breaks through the vision returns as a double self that has now changed in the portrait of limitless reflections. Indeed, she faces the infidelity of language that is woven and unwoven in the vision that exceeds boundaries in the “structure of framing” different possibilities of being before other men. She concludes that this man would “do the same to the next woman” (*U* 18.696-97). Molly sees men as being simply shallow: “they thick never understand what you say” (*U* 18.706). Her presence “affirms itself in discontinuity” as her being defers presence in the rubble of images lost in time.⁹²⁰

The fifth sentence returns to the space of the bed as Molly imagines Mulveyes together with Mrs Rubio’s presence. She doubles up on her previous experience of “pointing” to a “word” with her “hairpin to open it” (*U* 18.750). Her recollections gather momentum like a train running along tracks. This is evident in the flashes of

⁹¹⁹ Alan Roughley, *Reading Derrida Reading Joyce* (Gainesville: University Press Florida, 1999), p. 83.

⁹²⁰ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 161.

random images that run into Easter Sunday morning to stop and return to her desire for her first kiss: “it never entered my head what kissing meant till he put his tongue in my mouth his mouth was sweetlike young” (*U* 18.770-71). She recalls the fact that she was engaged in “May” and Bloom told her they were to be “married” in “3 years” (*U* 18.774). She stops to recall the images of what she was wearing on that day of courtship that merges with secondary details of how Bloom feared she might fall pregnant: “Ines told me that one drop even if it got into you” (*U* 18.802-03). Here the thought of being seen as a dead image runs in accord with Blanchot’s theory of dying the “death of the other” as Molly’s being breaks apart and comes together, resurrected in the new image. Blanchot argues that during the “infinite putting into question”, the limit-experience reveals itself in a flash in “the ecstatic ‘loss of knowledge’ (that) is nothing but the grasping seizure of contestation at the height of rupture and disposition”.⁹²¹ The subject dies the death of the other in the worklessness after she confesses she “tried it with a Banana” (*U* 18.803-04). The subject’s desire to get to the origin of her virginal experience with Bloom recalls that she “pulled him off” in her “handkerchief” (*U* 18.809-10). Each recollection fails to form a unity in being as language acts like supplication, whilst she faces dying in the excess of death, while “speaking in vain” and reducing herself to an “exegesis whose limit is given in the ‘interior experience’”.⁹²² Indeed, Molly confesses that she spread her legs open, but she does not let the other “touch her inside her petticoat” (*U* 18.811). It is clear the “pretension of the ‘I’ is the sign of its imposture that has no origin. The self has never been the subject of this experience”.⁹²³ The other and the self remain separated, as the subject confesses that she engaged in a secret tryst with Bloom before marriage. She asks him to take “it out” as she “drew back the skin it had a kind of eye” (*U* 18.816).

⁹²¹ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 207.

⁹²² Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 206.

⁹²³ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 209.

She then recalls his promise to get married as she answers: “I promised him yes faithfully” 20 years ago (*U* 18.822). After the train interrupts the memory, which is in effect a memorial of being, Molly imagines that she could have been a “prima donna” if she hadn’t “married” Bloom for “looooooves” (*U* 18.897). She ethically re-evaluates her being in relation to his presence, which forms the “reappropriation” of being “divided and doubled” as another in the space of language.⁹²⁴ Ironically, Molly’s speech “reveals something singular” in the literature of betrayal, which Attridge notes in his theory of language in Joyce.⁹²⁵ The displacements, detours, and obsessions that reoccur in the “interruption” of images kill and resurrect the being in the duality of breath formed in prayer⁹²⁶, which now affirms nothing in the “dialectical reversal”.⁹²⁷ Here, Molly’s presence circles around an absence of a circle in the neuter that speaks for itself as an outsider that demands to be answered for in the voice of the word spoken. This juncture shows the possibility of being in language tied to speaking without the subject. Language answers the question of being alive in the act of dying.

The sixth sentence unfolds with Molly passing wind after the sound manifests into other images of the reflection, just as the subject is “shattered and opened”.⁹²⁸ The discontinuity of being rapidly breaks apart the image of a totality as she returns in a circle that opens up into the image of Gibraltar again. Her search for unity is traced in her recollection of not being able to sleep there either as her memory swings back and forth to revisit her. Here she imagines being 10 years old, but then her mind springs back in time to question Bloom’s reason for coming home at “4 in the morning” (*U* 18.927). Molly’s memory disconnects images as it pulls them apart as a means of finding answers in the relations of parts to other parts, ruined and rewritten

⁹²⁴ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 214.

⁹²⁵ See Derek Attridge, *The Singularity of Literature* (London: Routledge, 2004), pp. 63- 65.

⁹²⁶ Hill, *Blanchot: Extreme Contemporary*, p. 93.

⁹²⁷ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 208.

⁹²⁸ Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, p. 65.

in her fragmentary memory associated with real lived experience. However, instead of finding answers in the relations, she discovers endless questions in the exchange of infinite difference in the images erased over for the non-being. It is important to bear in mind that “there is an exchange of one’s existence with or for the letter—which is either to lose or to gain existence—is also imposed upon God”.⁹²⁹ Admittedly, she returns to the problem of being in exchange with the exterior word as she questions the other, “squandering money and getting drunker and drunker” (*U* 18.928-29). This memory leads to Molly’s recollection of remembering how much she loves hearing Bloom coming home and “falling up the stairs in the morning” (*U* 18.933). Each remembrance recaptures the past in the exchange that plays out in the drama of fidelity for infidelity. Ironically she recognises herself in the other as she faces the cat that appears to be “as bad as a woman”, while she recalls Bloom’s affection for the creature. Molly asks: “I wonder do they see anything that we cant staring like that” (*U* 18.936-37). The silent cry of the cat is comparable with the silent sound unwinding in Molly’s dialogue that is erased over in the repetition linked back to the sacred God. Indeed, she feels that the cat knows more than she does in regard to human relations, which appear to be naked in the “relation ‘immediately’ without measure”.⁹³⁰ Bloom’s observation of the cat follows in accord with his wife’s affirmation that reveals a reversal of positions, bound to the betrayal of the exteriority. This in effect is “a relation with the unknown that is speech’s unique gift”.⁹³¹ Nevertheless, Molly’s mind spirals outwards in diversion as she breaks into images of buying “fish” in comparison to “meat” or “ham”. Her stream of consciousness flows like a river outwards in chance associations that reveal her being as a pastiche of particles floating midstream in a boat, while Bloom is designated as a mere observer. She then

⁹²⁹ Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, p. 70

⁹³⁰ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 212.

⁹³¹ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 212.

wonders, “what kind is that book” he bought, titled, “Sweets of Sin” (*U* 18.968). Bloom’s gift of erotic fiction feeds her lack in desire that is separated by a lack in being which exists as an empty hole rebuilding itself with language that is also a book. She refuses to believe that she is a totality—death: “finished out and laid on the shelf” (*U* 18.1022). Moreover, her being is an open book that uproots her being at the limit to life in death—dying: “not no nor anything like it well see well see” (*U* 18.1023).

Hill argues that “the experience of dying” follows the “realisation of inescapable finitude and an occasion for boundless gaiety”.⁹³² This limit-experience is present in the overwhelming, boundless affirmation that marks an impossibility to get to a centre of truth. Indeed, Molly’s being in question returns to the age of “22” as she recalls “it went into the wrong place”. This memory spirals out in movement of reversal and separation, which justifies the impossibility of death. Death is seen as ontological erosion on being in language. Blanchot claims that “reversal is the principle feature of the new sciences”.⁹³³ Moreover, he claims that “redoubling-repetition-is the important word here”, because it is “‘repetition’ that opens this very possibility itself”.⁹³⁴ The thought of being doubled over in repetition proceeds as Molly proceeds to comment on the exchange that takes place in relations of difference seen in the acts of dying before language of the other. She states “it must be real love if a man gives up his life for her” (*U* 18.1056). It is imperative to note that desire for the “unknown relation” is an impossible thought—dying. Indeed, Molly questions why Bloom married her whilst knowing this fact. She argues that most would not commit themselves exclusively. In fact she thinks it is strange or even “foolish” to be in “love” (*U* 18.1061-63). This comment is just considering Molly and Bloom are separated by language that is deceitful and corrosive on being. It is either nothing or

⁹³² Hill, *Blanchot: Extreme Contemporary*, p. 97.

⁹³³ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 249.

⁹³⁴ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 249.

everything Separation is ethically linked to Molly's inability to get to the real truth and to the first memory that is always a copy of the first image, which is also a copy of the word. Thus, her mind spirals out as she confesses: "its pouring out of me like the sea" (*U* 18.1121). Molly's memory flows into water imagery as her thoughts return to her "insides", present in her "vagina". This imaginary leads her to recall the doctor whom she detests: "I wouldn't marry him not if he was the last man in the world" (*U* 18.1157-58). Spiralling outwards in a lack her mind tries to capture the past in the present images that are dead thoughts resurrected in the repetition with a twist of difference. The text that is a body doubles upon itself, as it continues to return back to the images of Molly's body that she perceives as sacred. Indeed, the creativity of being is in itself desire, which is a lack where "everything that comes from it is a thing of beauty" (*U* 18.1177-78). Here, she questions the appearance of her body that is compared to a "jewess" (*U* 18.1184). Inevitably, truth is resurrected in the act of interpretation of the words, related back in the book. Moreover, the remembrance of the Jewish portrait connects her negative thought back to Bloom's absent presence as she recalls his desire for her to sing in French. His strange habits lead her to rethink the difference of being that is in fact alluring. It is also what leads her towards the exteriority: "there isnt in all creation another man with the habits he has look at the way hes sleeping at the foot of the bed" (*U* 18.1198-1199). Molly's observation of Bloom's reversal of conventional sleeping habits adds to his portrait of being Jewish which shows sheer difference. This fact reinforces his Jewish being that stands separate from God before all. Derrida argues "negativity in God is our freedom" and it is relocated in the question.⁹³⁵ Molly then goes on the question Bloom's reversal of sleeping positions at the "foot of the bed" (*U* 18.1199). The image of the bed opens up

⁹³⁵ Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, p. 67.

another question as she imagines the comfort of her past as she recalls being “bad as ever after 16 years”, which signifies her “open” lack in the being that escapes closure.

Molly’s negative thought meanders downstream, dissecting her past in the present as she continues to evaluate her being in relation to Bloom’s relations. It is possible to compare her being with Nietzsche’s perfect woman: “the perfect woman tears you to pieces when she loves you”.⁹³⁶ Indeed, Derrida argues that the question of woman is perceived in the creative realm of being that comes from a non-origin, which “suspends the decidable opposition of true and non-true”.⁹³⁷ Therefore, the being without an “I” justifies itself in Derrida’s theory of the “stylate spur” which “rips through the veil” by “unveiling”.⁹³⁸ Indeed, the creative force which remains invisible hides in the trace. It is possible to compare Molly’s rewriting of her memory as an unveiling of the hidden being as she calls Stephen’s presence into question. She wonders: “what sort is his son he says hes an author and going to be a university professor of Italian and Im to take lessons” (*U* 18.1300-02). Molly doubts the authenticity of the photo image shown to her of Stephen by Bloom “11 years ago” (*U* 18.1311). Here Molly’s thought simply goes “from question to question to the point where the question” is “pushed toward a limit, becomes a response”.⁹³⁹ Indeed, Molly desperately tries to calculate time in spaces of difference as her being measures parts that make up the whole scene that is never complete, as each question signifies an incomplete lack in her memory, “but without constituting a whole—the difference and the repetition, thus the non-identity of a same?”⁹⁴⁰ Blanchot argues that the “infinite of the repetition cannot be totalized”.⁹⁴¹ Furthermore, her being is constantly in the

⁹³⁶ Derrida, *Spurs*, p. 107.

⁹³⁷ Derrida, *Spurs*, p. 107.

⁹³⁸ Derrida, *Spurs*, p. 107.

⁹³⁹ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 108.

⁹⁴⁰ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 275.

⁹⁴¹ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 275.

process of becoming a negative other image. Ironically she asks herself, “didn’t I dream something too yes” (*U* 18.1320). Here, we witness a rigorous exegesis that is “constantly unfaithful” in the “inaccessible” truth, which can also be compared to Weil’s search for a truth in the word.⁹⁴² A sense of the uncanny enters the scene as Molly’s thoughts reconstruct her memory in the reproduction. She declares that “there is” something alluring about poetics which mirrors her dream: “I always liked poetry” (*U* 18.1324). The image connected to the poetics of negativity undermines the thought that turns her being to sheer exteriority. Molly’s lack in being surpasses the limit to absence as she shows that the “answer always came first”, thus because there is no answer, she affirms the intimacy of the Outside.⁹⁴³ She wonders if Dedalus is not suitable for her being a “stuck up university student”. This image leads to the thought of sex with him in comparison to “those pigs of men” that are unclean and decrepit. Molly’s thoughts scramble from one image to another, as her being folds in negative thought. Here she notices, he does “not” think her “stupid” (*U* 18.1362). The subject proceeds to confess that she will teach him the art of lovemaking as she teaches him to “feel” her creative presence (*U* 18.1365). Indeed, the creative allure of being feminine harbours a secret that filters into poetics in search of truth for an ideal lover.

In retrospect, Molly’s experience of Bloom’s separation from her portrays his desire reflected back into her recollections. The images do not form a unity in the relationship that exists in the excess that builds up in Molly’s thought. Hence, she defends the female body that gives birth to life. Her thoughts exceed limits as she imagines men and women subverted in their roles. She imagines: “women going and killing one another and slaughtering . . . rolling around drunk . . . or gambling” (*U* 18.1435-37). Molly pays homage to the nourishing maternal body of the “mother”

⁹⁴² Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 111.

⁹⁴³ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 108.

seen as a symbol for unity and love. She even goes on to state that Stephen's troublesome behaviour is a manifestation of having no "mother" (*U* 18.1441). She argues that "love" comes from the "home" and the core of the home is the "maternal body", which is the sacred space. Ironically, this space is never fully experienced. It remains hidden behind a veil of language that escapes signification. This thought supports Levinas' argument that claims the "beloved" encounter with the feminine "brings us back to the virginity" that "remains ungraspable" withdrawing, hidden in the clandestine nature of language.⁹⁴⁴ Indeed, Molly herself recalls the soothing comfort of "love coming home after dances" (*U* 18.1455-56). However, the truth of the matter shows: "Love is not reducible to knowledge . . . It grasps nothing".⁹⁴⁵ The subject's mind regresses as she imagines the "dreadful lot of bitches" before Bloom's presence as she questions the present, as her mind circles back to being in bed. Her sexual desire flares up in a repeated lack in being, just as other images surface in her mental space that fills up with the words of the empty home. She begins to confess that she is "fucked yes and damn well fucked too up to my neck" (*U* 18.1511). Her admission of adultery is repeated as she states the "spunk" is on the "sheets", while she cries out, "I am an adulteress" in a "vale of tears" (*U* 18.1517). The spunk can be compared to words that fill the paper of memory, as her tears spring back to her experience of being in love. Molly then remembers the answer to the final question of faith and the reason why she said "yes" to Bloom's proposal: "yes that was why I liked him because I saw he understood or felt what a woman is and I knew I could always get round him" (*U* 18.1578-79). It is clear that Bloom's insight into difference in being in relations justifies Molly "yes". The "yes" resonates as an ongoing interruption of breaks in the response to the final call of the question of being. Indeed,

⁹⁴⁴ Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, p. 258.

⁹⁴⁵ Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, p. 261.

her response marks an ethical declaration, which Eaglestone points out in his writing on the irreducibility of being in relation to alterity. He argues: “the inability to comprehend and to grasp the other leads to the way in which ethics, although not a sort of knowledge accomplishes the critical essence of knowledge”.⁹⁴⁶ Therefore, Molly’s response in the word “yes” attests to the ethical limit to being and not being before God, which coincides with the remembering the spirit of life in the breath of the voice: “yes and how he kissed me . . . again yes and then he asked me would I yes to say yes . . . going like mad and yes I said yes I will Yes” (*U* 18.1603-09). Her affirmation of the several yesses reveals a commitment to the infidelity of being in a relation to the other absent that forms no unity with the being in the self. This vision marks a testimony to the ethics of fidelity of being committed to the betrayal of truth that is found lying in the space of language. Here Derrida associates the word “yes” with infinity of being before the unknown God that is seen in the “yes of memory . . . immediately doubles the light, dancing yes of affirmation, the open affirmation of the gift”.⁹⁴⁷ Indeed the yes “returns as circle” in the affirmation of being as unknown.⁹⁴⁸

This chapter explored Molly’s being that responded to the question of being in relation to language. Her desire for unity in being failed to form a whole totality. This was due to the fragmented nature of memory and the duplicitous nature of language. However, this double bind did in fact reveal Molly’s encounter with presence at the limit, which revealed the problematic experience of alterity for being in the language of the neuter-God. This began in a “questioning movement where being veers and appears as the suspension of being in its turning”.⁹⁴⁹ In effect Molly’s experience betan with her relationship with Bloom. Here the problem of being in a relation to the

⁹⁴⁶ Eaglestone, “Postmodernism and Ethics”, in *The Cambridge Companion to Postmodernism*, p. 187.

⁹⁴⁷ Derrida, *Acts of Literature*, p. 308.

⁹⁴⁸ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 275.

⁹⁴⁹ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 13.

exteriority unveiled itself from the spacing of difference in being. The slippery nature of words that exist in relation to the subject's being failed to form a unity, which revealed an element of deception and infidelity linked back to the dialectic of language. Molly confessed that Bloom's inability to fulfil her sexual needs led her to seek affection elsewhere, outside the marital bed of the home. Bloom's inability to fulfil his wife's sexual needs revealed that he was incapable of having a conventional sexual experience with the other in the bed of the text. Thus, his perverse desire to hear Molly speak about other men reduced her to a voice and only encouraged her to fulfil the fantasy of sleeping with other men in different positions. The power of the words spoken manifested into a betrayal of being in missed, inauthentic experiences for Molly, originally presented in Bloom's desire for her to be an adulteress. Therefore, she became an adulteress knowingly playing secret games with him and also behind his back. Nevertheless, Molly declared that her affairs did not offend Bloom as they merely aroused his fetish for difference, while attesting to separation in relations. She disclosed the fact that she was tempted to tell him about her sexual alliances with other men, such as Boylan, even though she was deeply attached to Bloom's absent presence. However, it was the kiss that always seduced her being in the return back to the unforgettable memory of desire for truth in being. Molly's countless attempts to grasp the authentic experience in her memory fell into the repetition of redoubling in a betrayal of language in search of the virginal experience. This search kept a hold on her being in relation to breath, which linked her to a hidden truth that harboured a secret tryst undisclosed. However, the "secret without a secret" hidden in the letters presented being to be an open letter that refuses to close: "*Who? Who asks the question who? Where? How? When? Who arrives?*"⁹⁵⁰ The search for an

⁹⁵⁰ Derrida, *A Taste for the Secret*, p. 41.

origin in language led to Molly's commitment to the infidelity in being before the unknown letter that withdraws being into the space of language. The separation depicted in the double bind of the lack of sexual contact revealed a detour in the relation of difference seen "redoubling" in the language. Indeed, language circled around an absent centre that held them both at the limit to language. This problem begs one to question the ethics of marriage and the ethical responsibility of being. This theory follows in accord with Stephen's theory of separation in being, seen in the metamorphosis of becoming an infinite other—limitless. While the shifting nature of the voice remained an unknown "who", the artist had the final say in the odyssey to being the woman named Molly in *Ulysses*: "*Trieste-Zurich-Paris, 1914-1921*" (*U* 18.1610). The next chapter will examine the problem of alterity and the question of being in relation to language in HCE, Shem/Shاون, and ALP in *Finnegans Wake*.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Fragmentation of Being in the *Wake*

“Whoever says fragment ought not say simply the fragmenting of an already existent reality or the moment of a whole still to come. This is hard to envisage . . . caught between two limits: the imagining of the integrity of substance and the imagining of a dialectical becoming”.⁹⁵¹

This chapter will examine the “fragmentation of being” in relation to language in *Finnegans Wake*. Blanchot’s writings on Nietzsche’s dialectic of negativity in “fragmentary writing” and the “neuter” will be used to explore HCE, Shem, Shaun, and ALP’s in conjunction with his writing on the “limit-experience”.⁹⁵² In accord, Derrida’s essay on “Two Words for Joyce” will be discussed in light of the question of “being Jewish” that resurfaces as an ethical problem. Ostensibly, Jewish thought is seen to be “ethical rather than conceptual”, because it is oriented towards the humanism of others.⁹⁵³ Indeed, in the wake of being before the thought of the negative “detached fragment” seen in the image of the letter, being “multiplies itself” in the “babalong” call to the Outside, unknown God.⁹⁵⁴ The problem of knowing “who” is responding to the call of the unknown other develops in the wake of being displaced in fragments of letters. Essentially, Nadel notes: “Hebrew reaffirmed Joyce’s belief that the semantic boundaries of letters and words are limitless and that a single letter can contain the world”.⁹⁵⁵ Blanchot argues that in the Jewish religious tradition, “the secret name of God is the object of a special reverence and can even, through the contemplation and combination of letters, ecstatically engage in the divine mystery . . .

⁹⁵¹ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 307.

⁹⁵² HCE and ALP are the acronyms used for “Here Comes Everybody” and “Anna Livia Plurabelle”, but their names fragment into a mirage of differences. Here, subject’s initials will be used primarily.

⁹⁵³ Bruns, *Maurice Blanchot*, p. 218.

⁹⁵⁴ Derrida, “Two Words for Joyce”, in *Post-Structuralist Joyce*, p. 152.

⁹⁵⁵ Nadel, *Joyce and the Jews*, p. 138.

become the name of God”.⁹⁵⁶ In light of the letters redoubling into the portrait of otherness and right into infinity, dying and the death of man will be explored in the wake of being shattered by way of a Nietzschean hammer: “Must one first shatter their ears to teach them to hear with their eyes?”⁹⁵⁷ In addition, “Here Comes Everyone” will be read as being “marks of breakage” in the fragments cutting being apart. His presence becomes the exteriority of the displacement and reversal of letters.

The drama of being grounded in the thought of fragmentary language is noted by Eide in her critique of “systems of difference” that adheres to a response in the ethics of being “an other”.⁹⁵⁸ Thus, the being of “difference and opposition” will also be explored in the twins Shem, Shaun, and Anna Livia Plurabelle (who is also known as ALP).⁹⁵⁹ It is evident that Shem’s being faces the “affliction” of being before the negativity of language, which Stephen Dedalus faces in the portrait of the artist in *Ulysses*. And ALP shows similar traits of being in the betrayal of language Molly presents in *Ulysses*. Shem’s being is called into question by the letters that fold into “dis-location” of the twin like movement as he redoubles into difference, through separation. His presence that is coined into new re-beginnings, leads to the “erasure” of being in the discontinuous speech that perpetually breaks him apart. Shaun also doubles up on his twin’s experience with language, as he comments on the duplicity of being that will be examined. ALP’s creative exegesis will be also be explored in the being before death, as she shows the impossibility of “dying” while separating as other in the book of leaves that fall apart. ALP draws the narrative to the final limit to being a “non-origin” that presents “the disappearance of something called man”.⁹⁶⁰ However, the material letter attests to a truth in Jewish belief that shows breath of life

⁹⁵⁶ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 110.

⁹⁵⁷ Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, p. 43.

⁹⁵⁸ Eide, *Ethical Joyce*, p. 108.

⁹⁵⁹ Eide, *Ethical Joyce*, p. 108.

⁹⁶⁰ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 155

affirms being in absence. Indeed: “The work is the presence of the God’s absence, and in this absence it tends to make itself present”.⁹⁶¹ As a result, language comes to occupy the unknown being before death into infinity.⁹⁶² Here, Blanchot’s notion of the “neuter” will be explored alongside the negativity of being before broken letters doubling in the “the sacred in relation to God: absence in relation to presence”.⁹⁶³

While the unknown language of the neuter ruptures the reader’s comprehension with the disjointed dialogue, the task of reading absent images in the dark calls for a new way of understanding the fragmentary logic of separation and reversal. Blanchot argues that “the neuter derives, in the most simply way, from a negation of two terms; neuter, neither one nor the other. Neither nor the other, nothing more precise”.⁹⁶⁴ Essentially, the neuter is the narrative: “he [or ‘it, il], whether absent or present, whether it affirms itself or hides itself”.⁹⁶⁵ The neuter is linked to language that speaks for being as a double. Blanchot states that the neuter “marks the intrusion of the other—understood as neutral—in its irreducible strangeness and in its wily perversity”.⁹⁶⁶ Ironically, when the “majestic” neuter speaks no one speaks, because the other is a “unique presence” that hides in the “withdrawal” of the narrative”.⁹⁶⁷ Furthermore, the word that is left in the text is metaphoric of a dead coffin, which entombs man: “The word is the absence of that being, its nothingness, what is left when it has lost being”.⁹⁶⁸ The centre is in the Outside space of language where the “work is silent”.⁹⁶⁹ Hence, non-origin is the “centre that is in this case is the absence of any centre, since it is there that the trust of all unity comes to be shattered: in some

⁹⁶¹ Blanchot, *The Space of Literature*, p. 231.

⁹⁶² Bruns, *Maurice Blanchot*, p. 35.

⁹⁶³ Blanchot, *The Step Not Beyond*, p. 73.

⁹⁶⁴ Blanchot, *The Step Not Beyond*, p. 74.

⁹⁶⁵ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 385.

⁹⁶⁶ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 385.

⁹⁶⁷ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 385.

⁹⁶⁸ Blanchot, *The Work of Fire*, p. 322.

⁹⁶⁹ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 385.

sense the non-centre”.⁹⁷⁰ Likewise, the neuter is an absent God, hidden in the trace of a “spectral ghostlike” word that comes from “beyond the grave”.⁹⁷¹ Rabaté argues that in “silence” the “text approaches the region where a supreme silence reigns, returning to the original condition from which it emerges”.⁹⁷² Here, the reader stands at the limit to being present in the “possibility” of a return to the book where all is interpreted.⁹⁷³

The first words of *Finnegans Wake* begin with the end of the narrative that runs past the present image of the first book which begins with the Bible: “riverrun, past Eve and Adam’s, from swerve of shore to bend of bay, brings us by a commodius vicus of recirculation back to Howth Castle and Environs” (*FW* 3). According to Blanchot, the book begins with the Bible where “the logos is inscribed as law. Here the book attains its unsurpassable meaning, includes what exceeds its bounds on all sides and cannot be gotten past”.⁹⁷⁴ The unknown narrator’s reading begins with the broken image of the “river” joined to the word “run” that is coined together in words strung together, which attempt to “encompass all books”. Ironically, all the books of the being named HCE culminate into Here Comes Everybody, Finnegans, or “him again”. The changing face of one being HCE shows a multidimensional character. However, the neuter marks the intrusion of God’s presence with the “creator’s thumb” that remains hidden. As we shall see, the neuter is “constantly decentering the work” by way of “its unwarranted intrusion”.⁹⁷⁵ The opening of the narrative logic is framed in fragments that present being in separation, cutting, joining, and juxtaposing letters that fit into rhythmical sounds of becoming. This construction of the self portrays a

⁹⁷⁰ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 404.

⁹⁷¹ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 385.

⁹⁷² See Rabaté, “Silence in *Dubliners*”, in *James Joyce: New Perspectives*, p. 69. Rabaté follows in accord with Blanchot’s argument on the affirmation of being in silence. However, he does not elaborate on the notion behind silence as an ethic, because he claims “there is no space” to do so in the text.

⁹⁷³ Attridge, *The Singularity of Literature*, p. 129.

⁹⁷⁴ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 427

⁹⁷⁵ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, pp. 382-384.

“movement that turns will back to a counter will” as being collides with the past in the “reversal of perspectives”.⁹⁷⁶ This dialectic is a paradox, because it presents a double movement that combines the unity of separation in the thought of being part of the one whole in language. The constant play of breakage in being in the negativity of language disrupts the reader’s comprehension with the being dispersed into pluralism.

The first sentence is broken in half and cut into “two” pieces of a broken fragment. Here, the lack of punctuation at the beginning of the first sentence breaks regular comprehension apart, because the start of the book is at the end of the book that is broken in two to show a clear mark of separation. The narrator’s project is to break the circle of language as he recreates being into the “plural” being that stands in relation to all others, beginning with the Bible. The broken circle is a reference to the fact that we cannot know nor see the origin of the law of “logos” that turns round from the exterior, as it circles around being. According to Blanchot, language comes from the exteriority of being, from the “Outside”. The Outside is the space of language that calls being into question, as it demands a response. It is like a circular song that has an absent centre, because we cannot touch language.⁹⁷⁷ For Levinas language harbours a trait of “femininity” that is virginal, because it withdraws into itself when questioned as other.⁹⁷⁸ In fact, Blanchot compares Orpheus’ descent into death as the limit to being before the untouchable muse that is the limit to creation in language: “Eurydice is the limit of what art can attain: concealed behind a name and covered by a veil, she is the profoundly dark point towards which art, desire, death and the night all seem to lead”.⁹⁷⁹ Indeed, the scattered hero that longs for unity with the origin can only face but not touch the work that “reveals itself by concealing itself

⁹⁷⁶ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 149.

⁹⁷⁷ See Derrida, *Fiction and Testimony*, p.20. Derrida claims that “*language* does not exist, no one has ever encountered it—that it belongs to *a language*”.

⁹⁷⁸ Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, p. 264-65.

⁹⁷⁹ Blanchot, *The Gaze of Orpheus*, p. 99.

in the work”.⁹⁸⁰ Eurydice is the metaphor for the work that is dead, but when Orpheus descends into hell and looks at her she dies a double death. Blanchot argues that Orpheus’ sacred “gaze destroys its limits” while it also cuts into “infinity dead”.⁹⁸¹

In order to comprehend the problem of being before death in relation to the sacred space of language in HCE, we must turn to the Jewish ethic of “negativity”. For the Jew, separation upholds a law that forbids all unity in being with God. This thought is justified in the “sanctification of His name”⁹⁸². In accord, the name of Israel is used as a “sanctification of the name of God”.⁹⁸³ What is implied in Jewish thought is that the only way of recognising God’s presence is negativity, through the call of the name, which no “language can contain”.⁹⁸⁴ Blanchot notes that “the exteriority of the law finds its measure in responsibility with regard to the One” in language.⁹⁸⁵ He argues that Judaism monotheism shows that “men hold themselves in relation with what excludes all relation, the infinitely distant, the absolutely foreign God speaks”.⁹⁸⁶ This thought begins with Abraham’s break with Sumerian civilization as he renounces “dwelling there”, as “the Jewish people become a people through the exodus”.⁹⁸⁷ In addition, the space of language becomes the metaphor for crossing over into distance: “the desert makes of slaves of Egypt a people, without a land and bound by a word”.⁹⁸⁸ Thus, the origin of being Jewish is an ethical “decision” to separate being from “what is” language that remains “Unknown” in the word God.⁹⁸⁹ So too, Derrida responds to the Jewish ethic of separation in “Two Words for Joyce”. He breaks apart letters as he questions the limit to being before absence that is a pun on the Hebrew

⁹⁸⁰ Blanchot, *The Gaze of Orpheus*, p. 99.

⁹⁸¹ Blanchot, *The Gaze of Orpheus*, p. 101.

⁹⁸² Epstein, *Judaism*, p. 158.

⁹⁸³ Epstein, *Judaism*, p. 30.

⁹⁸⁴ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 433.

⁹⁸⁵ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 433.

⁹⁸⁶ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 127.

⁹⁸⁷ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 125.

⁹⁸⁸ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 125.

⁹⁸⁹ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 125.

name used for God—Yahweh: “HEWAR . . . I am he who is or who am’, says YAHWE”.⁹⁹⁰ Here, Derrida shows that language through itself is indeed untranslatable”.⁹⁹¹ Essentially, being Jewish signifies a truth found in the irreducible relation to language that upholds the sacred belief of strictly no unity for being itself.

The unknown God of the Jews presented himself to Moses in order to give the gift of his name, which is linked to the prayer of the Shema, another name for God’s presence.⁹⁹² Nadel states that the Shema is the “most sacred prayer of Judaism”, as it is an affirmation of the Jewish “commitment to one God” that is “a cycle of creation, revelation and redemption”.⁹⁹³ The Torah states that while YHWH (the Lord) reveals himself to Abram (who later changes his name on circumcision to Abraham) in Genesis, it is in the “first divine call to Moses” that “God named Himself as ‘the God of the Fathers, the God of Abraham’”.⁹⁹⁴ The name that is communicated to Moses unfolds in a secret medium on Mount Sinai: “EHYeH ASHeR EHYeH’ (I AM THAT I AM)”.⁹⁹⁵ Epstein states that the divine name used for the Jewish God is “YHWH (HE IS THAT WHICH HE IS)”.⁹⁹⁶ The Torah claims Moses is the inventor of writing, because he is the chosen Jew that breaks apart tablets. Coincidentally, the author makes a reference to “deuteronony” that links Finnegan to the exodus of re-crossing in history, which affirms being in a movement of separation and crossing as depicted in the Torah: “one yeastytday he sternely struxk his tete in a tub for to watsch the future of his fates but ere he swiftly stook it out again, by the might of moses” (*FW* 4). The narrator declares: “we hear also through the successive ages” the

⁹⁹⁰ Derrida, “Two Words for Joyce”, in *Post-Structuralist Joyce*, p. 145.

⁹⁹¹ Derrida, “Two Words for Joyce”, in *Post-Structuralist Joyce*, p. 257.

⁹⁹² See Jacques Derrida, *The Ear of the Other*, trans. Peggy Kamouf (London: University of Nebraska Press, 1985), pp. 98-110.

⁹⁹³ Nadel, *Joyce and the Jews*, p. 105.

⁹⁹⁴ Epstein, *Judaism*, p. 16.

⁹⁹⁵ Epstein, *Judaism*, p. 16.

⁹⁹⁶ Epstein, *Judaism*, p. 16.

subject is “in search of tighteousness”.⁹⁹⁷ The word tighteousness is another pun on the word “righteousness” that is central to Jewish dialectical thought, which justifies the silent call as “bitch bit at his ear” (*FW* 3). The ear is the reference to the silent witness to the unknown, God of the text. It is important to note that the reader is asked to read with their ears, just as one cannot see God, but only experience his absent presence.

Finnegan is also characterised as the “grasshopper” which is indicated in the fragmentation of different images that lead him into a parody on the Jewish prayer “Shema”. It is precisely the sounds that transform his being reborn in the medium of the ear, to voices, to whispers, and secrets of the hidden letter, which usher in a play on the pun of the Jewish prayer. Fragmented characters emerge with the scattered thought in the tower of Babel imagery: “Gwds with gurs are gtterdmmrng. Hlls vlls. The timid hearts of words all exeomnosunt. Mannagad, lammalelouh, how do that come?” (*FW* 258) High-pitched intonations evoke a sense of curiosity in the speech that follows into the pun on Babel: “Yip! Yup! Yarrah! And let Ned Nekulon extol Mak Makal and let him say unto him: Immi ammi Semmi. And shall not Babel be with Lebab? And he war” (*FW* 258). The myth of the Babel describes a tower built to “make a name” for builders to heaven instead of the Jewish God named Yahwe. The people spoke one language, but once building stopped people were scattered and language was dispersed. Derrida notes the Jewish fact that “being in memory of him” is a “gift” that “must be without return”.⁹⁹⁸ This thought is linked back to the notion of “silence” or “muteness” that remains faithful to separation. He proceeds to say that the war on Babel, which literally means “confusion” in Hebrew, is an act of “confusion of languages”. As a result, God “cannot be translated” because the text

⁹⁹⁷ See Epstein, *Judaism*, p. 56. According to Epstein, righteousness is the most important moral principle enunciated by the Jewish prophets: “Righteousness they considered to be the supreme law of the universe, and one of the essential attributes of God Himself”.

⁹⁹⁸ Derrida, “Two Words for Joyce”, in *Post-Structuralist Joyce*, p. 146.

does “not say anything”.⁹⁹⁹ Thus, the marks of the text stand in for a gift of the name present in “absence that is his most admirable name” in the lack of being in erasure.¹⁰⁰⁰ Finnegans is present in the dislocation, breaks and dispersions of names that metamorphosis into the increasing image of destruction for being in negativity.

The thought of being the negative other is central to Jewish thought and pertinent to the character of difference. The origin of negativity was first presented to being in Exodus, where there are numerous references to the sacred Presence of God that dwells in His name, which represents the divine, word YAHVA.¹⁰⁰¹ According to the Torah, the divine presence also named “shem” can only be encountered in the “words, the voice of the text”.¹⁰⁰² Thus, “to speak of God” causes “His name to dwell” in the actual speech that attests to presence”.¹⁰⁰³ Here, this passage can be seen as a parody in the prayer of Shema: “And he shall open his mouth and answer: I hear, O Ismael, how they laud is only as my loud is one” (FW 258). This discourse mimes Deuteronomy as Moses instructs the children of Israel to listen: “Hear, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord is One!”¹⁰⁰⁴ This verse is repeated in the Jewish prayer: “Loud, hear us! Loud, graciously hear us! Now have thy children entered into their habitations. And nationglad, camp meeting over, to shin it, Gov be thanked” (FW 258). Admittedly, the God of Israel has no visible manifest form, thus, “the ineffable name” that demarcates “Presence” cannot be “vocalised”.¹⁰⁰⁵ It is a negative notion that comes second, just like Gov. In the Torah; the sacred consists of “polyphony of names that effectively make the divine present in the text”.¹⁰⁰⁶ However, the thought of a

⁹⁹⁹ Derrida, “Two Words for Joyce”, in *Post-Structuralist Joyce*, p. 155.

¹⁰⁰⁰ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 117.

¹⁰⁰¹ Fishbane, *The Jewish Bible*, p. 1979.

¹⁰⁰² Nadel, *Joyce and the Jews*, p. 116.

¹⁰⁰³ Fishbane, *The Jewish Bible*, p. 1979.

¹⁰⁰⁴ Nadel, *Joyce and the Jews*, p. 106.

¹⁰⁰⁵ Fishbane, *The Jewish Bible*, p. 1979.

¹⁰⁰⁶ Fishbane, *The Jewish Bible*, p. 1980.

divine presence, against the plurality of idols is characterised in Jewish thought heard in “his voice” in the “happenings of the day”, while God is nowhere to be seen.¹⁰⁰⁷ From judgement to the thought of grace or “grass (grace) hopping” being moves towards the fulfilment of an eternal “babeling”, because “truth for the Jews is in fact auditory, not visual”.¹⁰⁰⁸ The question of “being” is in fact the “question” of the Jew.

Blanchot argues that the fragmentary being that is in relation to the other resembles a “character” that is “broken like a block to which nothing seems able to attach”.¹⁰⁰⁹ Indeed, Finnegans can also be read as the particle of the broken block unfinished “finished” as a presence returns “again” to part of the text now seen in the breath of “ah”, or “(h)e”. His character stands in as a representation of being the fragment that falls from the Tower of Babel. Ironically, in the act of the fall, he takes on multiple tongues as his presence breaks apart and is reborn in the breakage and difference, which follows in the wake of a “double movement”.¹⁰¹⁰ “As Mallarmé discovers at about the same time, difference is space, space inasmuch as ‘it spaces and disseminates itself—and time’ . . . the space of time and space”.¹⁰¹¹ Similarly, Finnegans or HCE’s presence differs as he is called into question in the “museyroom”, while being presents an exhaustive account of more than fifty repetitions of “This is”. The repetition of what, exactly, “this is” remains unknown in the “redoubling”.¹⁰¹² Blanchot argues that “redoubling—repetition” reveals the “non-origin” of being.¹⁰¹³ Indeed, the words related to “that” scramble to unrelated links, while something secret is questioned beneath the letters, just as hushed sounds speak out of the text by a muffled voice. Here, the neuter makes its presence felt in the secret beneath language.

¹⁰⁰⁷ Epstein, *Judaism*, p. 59.

¹⁰⁰⁸ Nadel, *Joyce and the Jews*, p. 116.

¹⁰⁰⁹ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 308.

¹⁰¹⁰ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 216.

¹⁰¹¹ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 162.

¹⁰¹² Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 249.

¹⁰¹³ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 249.

However, one must have as Derrida notes a “certain ear” to hear this Jewish secret:¹⁰¹⁴ “So This Is Dyoublong? Hush! Caution! Echoland! . . . Dbln . . . Hear? . . . List!”, while “cycles of events” unwind (*FW* 13). Blanchot argues that the centre of the word of the book has a “relation (a relation of alterity) with the absence of the work”.¹⁰¹⁵ Furthermore, he argues that it is in fact the “absence” itself that “haunts the book”.¹⁰¹⁶ The thought of absence is related to the unknown voice of language that calls being.

As a result, when being calls itself into question, language also calls itself into question. It is clear at once that “toh” is a pun on Throth the mythical God of writing who makes its presence felt (*FW* 14). Throth is responsible for the language that calls for a truth in the play of discontinuity. So too, Heath notes that a “constant displacement of possibilities of reading” unfolds in the “spiral” movement of “discontinuity”.¹⁰¹⁷ He notes that Beckett describes this strategy as the “absolute absence of the Absolute”.¹⁰¹⁸ Indeed, the breaks of discontinuity relate to the absence in the text. Here, the neuter interrupts the text to question “shams lowliness” in the mark of a breakage that filters into a reversal of positions in the reading. The neuter faces the reader: “(Stoop) if you are abcedminded, to this claybook, what curios of signs (please stoop), in this allaphbed!” (*FW* 18) The neuter asks the reader to stop and take note of the prayer book laid out like a bed or bad. He points to a revelation in the book that is a “Face at the eased” (*FW* 18). He questions the reader effaced at the limit: “Can you rede (since We and Thou had it out already) its world? . . . They lived und laughed ant loved end left. Forsin. Thy thingdome” (*FW* 18). Here, the speaker is requesting the reader take a close look at the arrangement of letters. The voice appears to be familiar with the subject called into question and put on trial for a crime as roles

¹⁰¹⁴ Derrida, *Acts of Literature*, p. 292.

¹⁰¹⁵ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 429.

¹⁰¹⁶ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 430.

¹⁰¹⁷ Heath, “Ambiviolences”, in *Post-Structuralist Joyce*, p. 46.

¹⁰¹⁸ Heath, “Ambiviolences”, in *Post-Structuralist Joyce*, p. 46.

reverse. As such, the reader becomes the subject scrutinised for a crime, but what that “thing” is remains concealed in “wrunes”. It is related to “allforabit” that happens in the everyday “roll”. The “writing” of the “detached” fragment is a “part larger than the whole”.¹⁰¹⁹ There is a secret scroll unfolding between questioner and the questioned, but the “limit of possibility” is “forbidden or allowed” by the law.¹⁰²⁰

In the clearest of terms, an ongoing association with the God of Abraham unfolds as HCE is linked to “Begog but he was, the G.O.G! He’s duddandgunne now” (FW 25). A pun on the Nietzschean death of God or the God “that” is dead again forms in the image of the end of man.¹⁰²¹ Nietzsche’s prophet Zarathustra brings a “gift” to man. That gift is the “Overman” that teaches man a poetic fable that represents a “new vision of what humanity might become” for being seen in the transvaluation of values:¹⁰²² “Could it be possible! This old saint has not yet heard in his forest that God is dead!”¹⁰²³ Spinks argues that: “The challenge Zarathustra presents to the ‘Higher man’ is to accept the responsibility of life without God”.¹⁰²⁴ He does this though “Jewish piety”.¹⁰²⁵ Indeed, there is no unity for the subject that is ripped apart limb by limb, or letter by letter, which ushers in the “laysure” or erasure of being in the transformation. Similarly, Blanchot declares that “the fragmentation of God is not the rash renunciation of unity, or a unity that remains one by becoming plural. Fragmentation is this God himself, that which has no relation”.¹⁰²⁶ Quite right in this case, because *Here Comes Everybody* cannot be read in a linear fashion as his continuous associations reveal a portrait that becomes constant dispersal in being a

¹⁰¹⁹ Derrida, “Two Words for Joyce”, in *Post-Structuralist Joyce*, p. 148.

¹⁰²⁰ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 431.

¹⁰²¹ Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, p. 41.

¹⁰²² Spinks, *Friedrich Nietzsche*, p. 116.

¹⁰²³ Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, p. 41.

¹⁰²⁴ Spinks, *Friedrich Nietzsche*, p. 119.

¹⁰²⁵ Spinks, *Friedrich Nietzsche*, p. 119.

¹⁰²⁶ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 157.

smithy “sibsubstitute” (*FW* 28). HCE is the “moving tear of time” understood as “relation without relation”.¹⁰²⁷ Nadel notes that in Jewish typology, an “additive manner” precedes a “linear” practice in reading being as “multiple”.¹⁰²⁸ The “inability of the language to finalise itself and entrap its meaning” runs in accord with the revelation that language signifies in the irreducible relation between the self and other.

Blanchot makes it clear that man stands in a “paradox” of language in relation to being and nothingness: “Fragmentary speech is speech of the between-two”.¹⁰²⁹ Hence, the view that creation “does not preserve, but destroys” being is seen in the letters that rupture into the separation of “redoubling, toward the Outside” as being is in relation to infinite thought.¹⁰³⁰ The logic behind infinite thought stems from the fact self-consciousness entails a circular return in language that is always negative. Similarly, the negativity of being Jewish shows an insurmountable distance in relations. Thus, “infinite separation becomes union with the infinite”.¹⁰³¹ Hence unity in infinite thought upholds “rebeginning” in “the non-origin” again.¹⁰³² The neuter states: “Creator he has created for his creatured ones a creation. White monothoid? . . . with a wicklowpattern . . . lashons of languages . . . totalisating him, even hamissim of himashim . . . in Edenborough” (*FW* 29). Indeed, the text that questions an origin in creation can be traced to the problem of genesis in the story of Eden. Correspondingly, the thought of only one God is juxtaposed with the “wicklow” shapes that disrupt the unity in the textual fabric of being duplicitous in nature. Here, the reference to “him” brings the reader back to the question of being in relation to a secret God marked in “issim” or “him” again. Blanchot states “the first words that come to Adam from high

¹⁰²⁷ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 158.

¹⁰²⁸ Nadel, *Joyce and the Jews*, p. 137.

¹⁰²⁹ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 158.

¹⁰³⁰ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 249.

¹⁰³¹ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 104.

¹⁰³² Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 249.

after he has lapsed are ‘Where are you?’ It falls to God to express the pre-eminent human question: ‘Where is man?’ As though, in some sense, there had to be a God in order that the questioning of man might reach its height and its breath: but a God speaking a human language, so that the depth of the question concerning us is handed over to language”.¹⁰³³ Thus, from the outset being is inhabited by a question mark.

The question of genesis is never far away from the problem of Abraham, which leads to the experience of being before a paradox. The problem of Abraham is linked to the question of being that diverges in the thought of creation from nothing, before the negative God who inhabits language as other. Indeed, HCE’s origin is questioned as he is compared to the fall of the first man Adam: “Now . . . concerning the genesis of Harold or Humphrey Chimp-den’s occupational agnomen” (*FW* 30). Once HCE is named, he is linked to past association of other names such as “Earwickers of Sidles-ham in the Hundred of Manhood”, which is connected to an offshoot of “Dublat” or a parody of Hamlet or Double (*FW* 30). The reader is told to “read the Reading”, which refers to words that point to “Reading” itself, or even reeds in a river. Here the play on puns in the stream of consciousness is fluid and changing. Indeed, Derrida succinctly addresses the problem of reading in his reading of the text, he names “event”, as he perceives himself as not having “begun to read”, which is the “most singular and active relationship he has with this work”.¹⁰³⁴ Correspondingly, Hill argues that textuality is “perpetually irreducible to any finite thematic, sematic” or “ethico-moral” of decision.¹⁰³⁵ Ironically, “Reading” also refers to another name being, “Humphrey or Harold” and “earwigger” (*FW* 30-31). There is a constant slide to the image of the “ear” being twigged by sounds of images in the dark, which one cannot see in the repetition but only hear in the rhythm doubling. It is as if the subject

¹⁰³³ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p.14.

¹⁰³⁴ Derrida, “Two Words for Joyce”, in *Post-Structuralist Joyce*, p. 148.

¹⁰³⁵ Hill, *Radical Indecision*, p. 299.

and reader have had their eyes pulled out like Oedipus to see all, while the subject has now disappeared into a silent void, nowhere to be seen, but only heard from a distance.

Strikingly, HCE resembles Bloom the “anythingarian” that slips into a mirage of differences in being in “Circe” in *Ulysses*. Indeed, HCE is depicted as a blooming change seen in the image of “this mountain and unto changeth doth one ascend” (*FW* 32). Furthermore, HCE is called into question just as Bloom is put on trial for being an unknown, fake, forgery, liar and thief. The neuter states: “Here Comes Everybody. An imposing everybody he always indeed looked, constantly the same as and equal to himself and magnificently well worthy of any and all such universalisation, every time he continually surveyed, amid vociferatings” (*FW* 32). Similarly, Bloom is known to have squeaky sneakers just as HCE is presented, “Dumbaling in leaky sneakers” (*FW* 34). Something is missing from the text, which is unaccountable for in the mirage of leaks spilling outwards. This fact attests to being part of a fragment of a relation that forms no totality. Fundamentally, HCE shifts and slides to the other character named Earwicker who is described as the “homogenius man” and linked to the word “Jew” again (*FW* 34-35). A story is told about the spoken voice. Indeed, the Torah was first delivered to Moses in oral form and then it was written down as a secondary copy, just as “oral style into the verbal for all time with ritual rhythemics, in quiritary quietude . . . upon the Open Bible and before the Great Taskmaste’s” (*FW* 36). Moreover, the Torah is interpreted via the “Midrash” which literally means, “to search after God”.¹⁰³⁶ Later the image of a hat being lifted recalls Bloom’s incessant change in telling lies in language, just as he is envisaged “saluting corpses” (*FW* 37). Death here is the limit of being that turns in the return of difference, circling being.

¹⁰³⁶ Fishbane, *The Jewish Bible*, p. 1863.

HCE has committed a secret crime like Bloom and it is clearly related to weaving a web of lies: “Of the persins sin this Eyrawyggla saga (which, thorough readable to int from and, is from tubb to buttom all falsetissues” (FW 48). There is no doubt that the subject Earwicker, an offshoot of HCE, has been charged with lying, which is ironic in the context that “truth” is “what lies outside language”.¹⁰³⁷ According to Zarathustra, “Everything straight lies” and “All truth is crooked, time itself is a circle”, as “eternity lies behind us” while “all things have been before”.¹⁰³⁸ Language stands in as an inauthentic substitute for the betrayed being or thing erased over. This fact begs the question Blanchot asks: “Who then is speaking here, then?”¹⁰³⁹ In support of this claim, Slote argues that perhaps the being called to hear is perhaps a “mark of failure: to be heard”.¹⁰⁴⁰ Indeed, there is “a metamorphosis that is taking shape” in the “language that does not speak”, which supports the claim that it is impossible for the subject to hear the call from the other.¹⁰⁴¹ Nevertheless, there is a pun on the metamorphosis of the being woven by a fabric of “tissues” basted like cloth to the Outside, just like a double bind in the language that marks fidelity to an absent God.¹⁰⁴² Derrida argues that the question of being in the text “marries the question of knowing who is laughing” behind the response.¹⁰⁴³ Slote argues that this “laughter becomes the most radical negative theology ever to grace God’s earth”.¹⁰⁴⁴ Indeed, the gracehopper is described as “quite a musical genius” that owns a “niced ear” and he is a “major poet” that worked “as far as the we-all-hang-together” (FW 48). The recollection of being before a web of “ispace” is a reference to “Israfel” or

¹⁰³⁷ Hill, *Radical Indecision*, p. 306.

¹⁰³⁸ Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, p. 178.

¹⁰³⁹ Blanchot, *The Book to Come*, p. 213.

¹⁰⁴⁰ Sam Slote, “No Symbols where none intended: Derrida’s war at Finnegans Wake”, in *James Joyce and the Difference of Language* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 200.

¹⁰⁴¹ Blanchot, *The Book to Come*, p. 216.

¹⁰⁴² Derrida, *Dissemination*, p. 65.

¹⁰⁴³ Derrida, *Acts of Literature*, p. 292.

¹⁰⁴⁴ Slote, “Derrida’s war at Finnegans Wake”, in *James Joyce and the Difference of Language*, p. 199.

Israel that recalls the Jewish thought of “incalculable” limits to being in relation to “God’s signature”.¹⁰⁴⁵ Here too, Jewish negativity justifies faith in the absent God.

A fragment of a being follows under the guise of “Orani” whom appears to be HCE, and another parody of Bloom: “He was. Sordid Sam, a dour decent deblander, the unwashed, haunted always by his ham, the unwished, at a word from Israfel the Summoner” (*FW* 49). Indeed, Bloom is haunted by pig’s feet in “Circe”. This brief sketch of the “Prigged” recalls the pork that stalks the double in the wake of sin. The subject hears the call coming from Israel, which is yet another reference to the Jewish God of Abraham. Indeed, the call comes from Shema, which is a repetition to hear the silent lord. Similarly, Derrida points out that the subject is a fragment that “repeats and mobilizes and babelizes” meaning that is “buried in each syllabic fragment, subjecting each atom of writing to fission in order to overload”.¹⁰⁴⁶ Each fragment is a pile of copies of rumours that signify being in excess of a limit as “fin fell” into a “landscape of mimage” (*FW* 53). A pattern emerges in the return of being at the limit, which is “equal to zero”.¹⁰⁴⁷ Here HCE resembles *The Unnamable*: “I am all those flecks, crossing, joining, separating, wherever I go I find myself . . . but a fragment . . . I am everything else, a silent thing, in a hard, empty . . . black place, where nothing speaks”.¹⁰⁴⁸ Words are coined together to form the fragmented being that is erased in the new image of the dead character broken up in the debris lying in the text. In fact, Eide argues that: “Rumour moves in flux, traversing and yet escaping the claims of legitimacy and authority”.¹⁰⁴⁹ In the fall into silent destruction, HCE or Finnegan falls from a ladder into nothing, “heaven: a stream, alplapping streamlet, coyly coiled um,

¹⁰⁴⁵ Derrida, “Two Words for Joyce”, in *Post-Structuralist Joyce*, p. 157.

¹⁰⁴⁶ Derrida, “Two Words for Joyce”, in *Post-Structuralist Joyce*, p. 149.

¹⁰⁴⁷ Hill, *Radical Indecision*, p. 299.

¹⁰⁴⁸ See Maurice Blanchot, “Where now? Who now?” in *The Book to Come*, Trans. Charlotte Mandell. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), p. 217.

¹⁰⁴⁹ Eide, *Ethical Joyce*, p. 100.

cool of her curls” (FW 57). HCE is also Cool who “parasoliloquisingly turtuned” while drinking in the “Parrot of Hell” with a “babble of a bottle of booze” into letters.

The reference to climbing and “fat’s falling fast” is related to Fin’s fall into the “limitlessness” of letters falling into absence, which is characterised in the question of language that turns on itself in HCE. Here Rabaté supports this claim as he argues the text “never ceases commenting on its own material appearance of living printed letters scurrying across a white page”.¹⁰⁵⁰ This fact exposes the play of deceit, hidden in the secret letter, which continues to circulate in a “huge chain envelope, written in seven divers stages of ink” (FW 66). Death imagery presents itself in the tomb that carries the body after life ends: “The coffin, a triumph of the illusionist’s art” (FW 66). Indeed, language resembles “a tomb and the void of that tomb is what makes language true”. But at the same time the “voice is reality and death becomes being”.¹⁰⁵¹ Admittedly, death is a secret “power that humanises”.¹⁰⁵² But this secret remains hidden, because man forgets that he exists in an inauthentic symbol: “The mouth that tells not will ever attract the unthinking tongue and so long as the obseen draws theirs which hear not so long till allearth’s dumbnation shall the blind lead the deaf” (FW 68). The retelling of Judgement day is followed by the image of Mosses that returns in the prayer on death: “Diggin Mosses or your horde of orts and oriorts to garble a garthen of Odin and lost paladays when all the eddams ended with aves. Armen” (FW 69). Indeed, Derrida notes that the “subject talks in several languages at once, parasiting them”; here he mimics the Jewish Midrash¹⁰⁵³ style of interpretation in questioning, “He War”.¹⁰⁵⁴ In fact, Epstein states that “the moral attributes revealed

¹⁰⁵⁰ Jean-Michel Rabaté, *James Joyce, Authorized Reader* (London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1991), p. 141.

¹⁰⁵¹ Blanchot, *The Work of Fire*, p. 336.

¹⁰⁵² Blanchot, *The Work of Fire*, p. 336.

¹⁰⁵³ Hoffman, C. M., *Judaism* (London: Hodder Education), p. 35.

¹⁰⁵⁴ Derrida, “Two Words for Joyce”, in *Post-Structuralist Joyce*, p. 149.

by God to Moses at Sinai” manifested in the knowledge that “serves as a bond of communion with God”.¹⁰⁵⁵ As a result, she argues that the imitation of God’s pursuit for justice man leads to righteousness, as first set out in the reading of the Torah.¹⁰⁵⁶

Moses destroyed the “first set of tablets” in Sinai, because they were regarded to be false idols. Edmond Jabès argues that the “breakage was a lesson for Moses from the Jews”.¹⁰⁵⁷ So too, the Jewish subject is “shattered and broken” into fragments of babel as a means of upholding a law that forbids unity in being.¹⁰⁵⁸ Derrida argues that the “Jew becomes exemplary of the situation of the poet, the man of speech and of writing”.¹⁰⁵⁹ He takes note that the subject is “the nucleus of a rupture”¹⁰⁶⁰ just as Blanchot argues, “everything is break and rupture”.¹⁰⁶¹ This is because being-in-itself stands in relation to the thought of being in a relation to at least “two” which marks dialectical thought: “truth begins at two” in the Jewish thought of presence and absence.¹⁰⁶² Hence man stands in relation to multiple thought of the fragmentary being that manifests itself into plurality, by way of thinking being in relation to separation, from God, while “denying the present.”¹⁰⁶³ Derrida argues that by way of a reversal of positions man is liberated and free in the letter, as he recreates life out of the old text: “This difference, this negativity in God is our freedom”.¹⁰⁶⁴ Here, the negative origin is the root of positively in the “question” of the letter itself.¹⁰⁶⁵ The reader is asked to question being from at least two positions that can be reversed, multiplied or fragmented, but always in relation to one such as

¹⁰⁵⁵ Epstein, *Judaism*, p. 125.

¹⁰⁵⁶ Epstein, *Judaism*, p. 20.

¹⁰⁵⁷ Nadel, *Joyce and the Jews*, p. 89.

¹⁰⁵⁸ Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, pp 64-78.

¹⁰⁵⁹ Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, p. 65.

¹⁰⁶⁰ Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, p. 67.

¹⁰⁶¹ Blanchot, *The Book to Come*, p. 230.

¹⁰⁶² Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 154.

¹⁰⁶³ Blanchot, *The Book to Come*, p. 230.

¹⁰⁶⁴ Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, p. 67.

¹⁰⁶⁵ Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, p. 64.

HCE who later becomes the letter E turned backwards in a reversal of positions (*FW* 18). The letter also sounds like “he”, but the he can be read in relation to “everyone” in the metamorphosis of difference that is “the outside’s reserve”.¹⁰⁶⁶ Thus being “defers as it were, from differing, and in this redoubling that withdraws it from itself affirms itself as discontinuity itself, difference itself”.¹⁰⁶⁷ The ethic of separation in the dialectical exegesis of being affirms that interpretation “lies beneath the letter”.¹⁰⁶⁸

HCE is sentenced to death for being the negative other, Jew: “jew-beggar, to be Executed Amen. Eerwicker, that paternmind, that paradigmatic ear, receptorententive as his if Dionysius” (*FW* 70). Ironically, the subject is sentenced to death even though Jewish thought recognises the twofold act of death in life in the question of being that is reborn in the tomb of the text. Indeed, the subject’s “effort is thus double” in the destruction of the “marks of breakage”.¹⁰⁶⁹ As a result, the mind that is described as a pattern is not linear in any sense, but explosive as the text now reads in all directions, backwards, forwards, sideways, but always circling around the hidden letter linked to God’s absence. While absence is the death of the subject it is also the life of creation. Here, the neuter argues: “Let us leave theories there and return to here’s here. Now hear. ’Tis gode (God) again. The teak coffin, Pughglasspanelfitted feets to the east . . . this, liever, is the thinghowe” (*FW* 76). The neuter observes that HCE returns in the form of a corpus, always in pieces, broken, and scattered. In accord, Blanchot notes that Zarathustra’s prophesy on language, for the Overman argues that man must shatter the universe to obtain freedom: “May your work be a battle . . . Man is something that should be overcome”.¹⁰⁷⁰ The shattered image of being is depicted in the image of man dying in a “field of carnage or

¹⁰⁶⁶ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 161.

¹⁰⁶⁷ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 161.

¹⁰⁶⁸ Epstein, *Judaism*, p. 132.

¹⁰⁶⁹ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 167.

¹⁰⁷⁰ Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, p. 74.

slaughter”.¹⁰⁷¹ The neuter interrupts the text: “Whoforyou lies his last, by the wrath of Bog, like the erst curst Hun in the bed of his treubleu Donawhu” (*FW* 76). The neuter challenges the reader to respond to the new being seen “dying” in relation to the fragment of “Bog” a substitute for God. Abraham’s name is referred to in the fall of the dying man (*FW* 78). Here being dies in the symbol, where there is no ending.

It is precisely, in the thought of the ineffable trace of God’s name that returns again in the word “Yes”, which is linked to the answer of “What has SPOKEN” in the secret unknown presence.¹⁰⁷² God stands in relation to being a voice that leaves behind a trace in the affirmation of the response to being questioned: “Yes, the viability of vicinals if invisible is invincible. And we are not trespassing on his corns either. Look at all the plotsch! Fuminian . . . but the past has made us this present” (*FW* 81). The voice “from elsewhere” asks us to examine being in the “scansion of rhythm” that carries the “non-identity of the same” back to haunt the subject bound to language as other.¹⁰⁷³ The name that metamorphoses from HCE’s presence reveals that being is walled up in a state of untruth, which is the abyss of language. The emptiness in being evokes ethical value: “You and your gift of your gift of your garbage abaht our Farver! And . . . Skam! Schams! Shames!” (*FW* 93) The being at the limit or “rebeginning-the non-origin of all begins” again in the “ruin” of letters.¹⁰⁷⁴ The ruin rectifies a new HCE that fractures again in the letters folding outwards into difference: “The letter! The litter! And the soother the bittther! Of eyebrow pencilled, by lipstipple penned. Borrowing a word and begging the question and stealing tinder and slipping like soap” (*FW* 93). Bloom too is regarded as being a slippery soap that transforms into doubled, deceitful, characters, just as HCE harbours a crime in the

¹⁰⁷¹ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 167.

¹⁰⁷² Blanchot, *A Voice from Elsewhere*, p. 9.

¹⁰⁷³ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 170

¹⁰⁷⁴ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 249.

secret letter as he scuppers along. He is constantly called into question for committing a secret crime, “Sin fromm Son” (*FW* 94). Again, the reference to God’s call is noted in the thought of a chameleon changing and not to be pinned down: “My unchanging Word is sacred” just as “moses” re-turns to “moses in his sole . . . pray it” (*FW* 167).

From the outset, Shem the penman is called into question by the neuter while he too questions the writing of being before the “word” that is examined. Shem has been associated with being HCE’s son, but he may be another transformation of HCE in a reversal of perspectives, or he may even be the unknown character reciting the Shema (oral Torah) that is reduced to the Shem (written Torah). Either way, he is the voice in the text at this point of analysis. The neuter notes that Shem’s habit of the everyday ethic in being consists of writing lies: “Putting truth and untruth” (*FW* 169). Shem’s presence is minutely dissected by the neuter who states that “Shem’s bodily getup” is composed of “eighteen to his mock lip”, which includes “all ears, an artificial tongue with a natural curl, not a foot to stand on” (*FW* 169). The comical subject resembles Derrida’s reading of Nietzsche’s “inverse cripple” that is depicted in the image of man being the “ear as big as a man”.¹⁰⁷⁵ Zarathustra’s states that he needs a “magnifying glass” to discern the “turgid little soul (that) was dangling from a stalk”¹⁰⁷⁶. When Zarathustra crosses a bridge he states: “I did not believe my eyes and looked and looked again and said at last: ‘That is an ear! An ear as big as a man! I looked more closely: and in fact under the ear there moved something that was pitifully small and meagre and slender. And in truth, the monstrous ear sat upon a little stalk’”.¹⁰⁷⁷ Indeed, the stalk or man corresponds to the letter in the book. Nevertheless, Nietzsche seeks to shatter the image of man in a battlefield, limb by

¹⁰⁷⁵ Derrida, *The Ear of the Other*, p. 3.

¹⁰⁷⁶ Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, p. 160.

¹⁰⁷⁷ Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, p. 160.

limb.¹⁰⁷⁸ By way of a dialectical reversal, Nietzsche questions man with a tiny small ear and a fat, enormous body. He warrants a reversal of perspectives as he calls man into question, as he questions the habitation of language that embodies a blind mute.

The neuter proceeds to sketch a fragmented portrait of the corrupt artist named Shem, who resembles Nietzsche's inverse cripple, because he has a "blind stomach, a deaf heart", and is also described as "manroot of all evil" (*FW* 169). Shem's portrait also resembles Stephen's Dedalus' portrait from *Ulysses*, as he too is obsessed with the question of being in relation to genesis or "the first riddle of the universe: asking, when is man not a man?" (*FW* 170) Shem is also described as the living corpse Lazarus, "deader walkner" theorising like a "crab . . . a little present from the past" (*FW* 170). There is a reference to being circumcised or "semisized", however, this thought also appears to be a "Sham". But it may be possible considering HCE can be read as the son of the father reversed in the Jewish "his-story". Indeed, the neuter continues to paint a portrait of a fiendish fraudster: "Shem was a sham and a low sham and his lowness crept out first via foodstuffs. So low was he that he preferred Gibsen's tea-time salmon tinned" (*FW* 170). While HCE has been criticised for hiding a letter and committing an unspeakable crime, just like Bloom was accused of betrayal and infidelity in "Circe", Shem is criticised for being a fake and forger that lies in writing, as he scribbles and spies upon other people's lives, while writing with his own body's filth and waste. Ironically, the neuter dons a sacerdotal cloak while spying on others. Hill notes that Derrida testifies to an essential betrayal of truth that he reworks in the "Nietzchian vein", which echoes the neuter's interrogation of Shem's deceitful portrait.¹⁰⁷⁹ Hill states Nietzsche implies that "truth itself" promises

¹⁰⁷⁸ Derrida, *The Ear of the Other*, p. 3.

¹⁰⁷⁹ Hill, *Radical Indecision*, p. 315.

man a betrayal: “treacherous value, and already from the outset a misleading, travesty, a forgery, a false idol, constituting untrue to the transparent self-coincidence”.¹⁰⁸⁰

There is also a link between the artist’s perception of truth and lies that stand in regard to the artist’s moral ethic of responsibility. Essentially, if all truth is a lie, why does the writer still engage in writing?¹⁰⁸¹ This problem is characterised in both Shem’s portrait of the artist and Kafka’s portrait of Gregor. The artist is reduced to the metamorphosis of a dung beetle that suffers from the affliction of being in indecision, as he secretly observes others while he hides from his family. In fact, Hill implicitly asks the question of literature, addressed to the being in question, that is relevant to the artist or critic today: “In such circumstances, to what or to whom does a reader, critic, writer, owe responsibility?”¹⁰⁸² It seems impossible to ask this question considering that the question of being remains unsolved, as does the question of literature that is “divided”.¹⁰⁸³ Indeed, Nietzsche argues in *The Genealogy of Morals* that “we are unknown to ourselves”.¹⁰⁸⁴ Derrida notes that the torment of knowing who signs in the signature is “this torment” related to the impossibility of separating “God” from the “countersigned”.¹⁰⁸⁵ The problem is not resolved as the neuter mocks the artist as he wields power in the contestation that betrays being in language: “Talk about lowness! Any dog’s quantity of it visibly oozed out thickly from this dirty little blacking beetle” (*FW* 171). In other words, Shem’s being is steeped in the redemptive Jewish exegesis of negativity. Here, he descends into the hell of suffering from an inability to act as he drags around fluff, hair and scraps of food, hiding in corners and sliding under chairs. Subsequently, the neuter states that Shem is “Exexex!

¹⁰⁸⁰ Hill, *Radical Indecision*, p. 315.

¹⁰⁸¹ Hill, *Radical Indecision*, p. 315.

¹⁰⁸² Hill, *Radical Indecision*, p. 315.

¹⁰⁸³ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 432.

¹⁰⁸⁴ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Genealogy of Morals*, trans. Horace B. Samuel (Dover Publications: New York, 2003), p. 1.

¹⁰⁸⁵ Derrida, “Two Words for Joyce”, in *Post-Structuralist Joyce*, p. 158.

COMMUNICATED” just like Gregor who is exiled from the family and taken to the butcher, after he is crucified, and then death leads to his purification in enunciation.

Ironically, the “dogpoet” or God poet named Shem is damned for putting language into question. The neuter states that Shem, “unconsciously explaining, for inkstands, with a meticulousness bordering on the insane, the various meanings of all the different parts of speech he misused and cuttlefishing every lie unshrinkable about all” (*FW* 173). Indeed, Blanchot argues: “language in which the origin speaks is essentially prophetic”.¹⁰⁸⁶ Here, the neuter is prophetic because it speaks without origin, as it beckons us to question Shem whose origin in Hebrew is “name or “the Name”. “Shem” is used to avoid saying the actual name God.¹⁰⁸⁷ As such Shem falls into the hell of being under erasure of negative thought as he is called a liar and thief who uses “speech without words” being a “noxious pervert’s perfect lowness” (*FW* 174). Seen from a reversal of positions, the critic is creating the self that is crossed out by letters and being is reborn into difference. He declares: “I’m yoush, see wha’m hearing?” (*FW* 174) Like Stephen, Shem is afflicted in being before the dead author. The neuter implies that Shem owes a debt to the absent God, even though responsibility can(not) be justified for being at the limit to literature: “shoot shy Shem should the shit . . . face before being hosed and creaded (uprip and jack him!) by six or a dozen gayboys” (*FW* 179).¹⁰⁸⁸ Shem is a parody of the artist and he is accused of misleading the reader, “making belive to read his usylessly unreadable Blue Book of Eccles” (*FW* 179). We are told the “post figure” had “scum on his tongue” and he “forged palimpsests . . . lucifericiously” (*FW* 182). The voice of the neuter remains

¹⁰⁸⁶ Blanchot, *The Book to Come*, p. 61.

¹⁰⁸⁷ Fishbane, *The Jewish Bible*, p. 2139.

¹⁰⁸⁸ Blanchot, *The Writing of the Disaster*, p. 26. Blanchot argues that the “disaster” is measured in reason that is unjustifiable, because “responsibility is rooted where there is no foundation”.

“absolutely apart”.¹⁰⁸⁹ Indeed, Derrida links Shem’s crime to the building a Tower to know God: “The God of fire assigns to the Shem the necessary, fatal and impossible translation of his name, of the vocable with which he signs his act of war”.¹⁰⁹⁰

Shem’s being that is called into question and put on trial is made to feel guilt for being a writer and artist even though there is truth in lying. It is important to note that neither HCE nor Bloom has any doubt that the ineffable name of the hidden letter is the silent God of Abraham. However Shem is portrayed as a guilty criminal that fails to comprehend the sacred that cannot be translated. Indeed, he comes face to face the nihilism of being absolutely separated from language, unlike Bloom who perceives dialectics in disunity in infinite separation. As such, fire imagery emerges in the sentence that portrays the blazing return of the corrupt artist, scribbling and writing more letters in the fragmentary disposition of being, “that rosy lampoon’s effuvius burning and with help of the simulchronic flush in his pann” (*FW* 182). Shem’s portrait is ridiculed by the neuter that takes note of the incalculable limits to the “impossible translation of his name”, just as the subject is redoubled in the act of pillaging and plagiarising other peoples work embedded in language: “he scrabbled and scratched and scribbled and skrevented nameless shamelessness about everybody ever he met” (*FW* 182). The being in repetition unwinds itself over again as noted by Derrida, as being is now at the limit to the problem of being seen in the translation of being nothing and everything: “Nothing, everything” again, where there remains a “limit”.¹⁰⁹¹ That limit constitutes a truth. The essential limit of repetition forms a “truth of this multiplicity” that returns in the “attributes” Derrida foresees in the return “towards the subject . . . who is divided by it right from the origin”.¹⁰⁹² From the

¹⁰⁸⁹ Blanchot, *The Book to Come*, p. 75.

¹⁰⁹⁰ Derrida, “Two Words for Joyce”, in *Post-Structuralist Joyce*, p. 154.

¹⁰⁹¹ Derrida, “Two Words for Joyce”, in *Post-Structuralist Joyce*, p. 155.

¹⁰⁹² Derrida, “Two Words for Joyce”, in *Post-Structuralist Joyce*, p. 155.

beginning, HCE and Shem, are from the outset divided by difference that manifests itself from the separation of being, which stands in relation to language. Thus, a truth in lying emerges, because each time one interprets language, repetition speaks out.

While the neuter stands in relation to Shem's being it does not recognise that truth in language lies in the constant acts of repetition, without a return. Indeed, the act of being erased without a return is characterised in Blanchot's notion of the "unworking" of "denouement".¹⁰⁹³ Essentially, the logic behind the being that redoubles over again in separation disappears in the word. This is evident as the neuter singles Shem out as he sees him as an "ABORTISEMENT". Here Shem is "worklessness" of being walled up in "disarray".¹⁰⁹⁴ Moreover, Shem studied with "stolen fruit" as he copied "all their various styles of signature" (FW 181). The neuter's calling Shem a corrupt, "evilsmeater" calls out in vein before the "stipple endlessly inartistic portraits of himself in the act of reciting old" (FW 182). Shem's own "infinite questioning does not really succeed in making it disappear, but rather affirms it through this disappearance".¹⁰⁹⁵ Thus, the thought of nihilism overcomes being stuck in ritualistic negativity, because the negativity is returned into a positive state of nothingness that lies in the rewriting of forgery.¹⁰⁹⁶ Blanchot notes that there is "still too much positivity in nothingness".¹⁰⁹⁷ Shem is akin to the "true creator" that has a "face of the destroyer and the malice of the criminal" in the Nietzschean sense.¹⁰⁹⁸ Nietzsche declares he wants to teach the men to read otherwise: "Behold the good and the just! Whom do they hate most? Him who smashes their tables of values,

¹⁰⁹³ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 424.

¹⁰⁹⁴ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 420.

¹⁰⁹⁵ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 403.

¹⁰⁹⁶ See Heath, "Ambiviolences", p. 33. Heath argues that "in place of style we have *plagiarism*".

¹⁰⁹⁷ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 403.

¹⁰⁹⁸ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 402.

the breaker, the law-breaker—but he is the creator”.¹⁰⁹⁹ Indeed, this ethic goes beyond the moral of lies and fiction in the thought that all truth is “error” as Nietzsche warns. But Shem proceeds to be criticised by the neuter, because he smashes up quotations in the “quashed quotatoes” (*FW* 183). Shem’s “unquestionable issue papers” and “seedy ejaculations, limerick damns, crocodile tears, split ink” and “blasphemantory spits” is the work of the fragmentation that is “the burning of a parching breath” (*FW* 183).¹¹⁰⁰

Shem’s portrait is a “singular” encounter with the work of the outside. This fact pertains to the enigma of being that can only be justified in the text as Attridge notes in his argument. He alludes to the fact that “no justice is possible” without a trial and without the “singularity” of the case in literature.¹¹⁰¹ The portrait of “split ink” stands in relation to an origin that is the trial of language, which repeats itself in the deceit that present in the juxtapositions of coinciding contrarities (*FW* 183). The “absence of any centre” or real truth is noted by Blanchot as being a relation with the centre of “every relation” and that relation is the “possibility that is literature”, where the finite meets the infinite.¹¹⁰² Here too, the subject’s relation with language is “divided” before “the dialectic” where the law in its turn will dissolve”.¹¹⁰³ Indeed, the neuter repeats the affirmation of presence that returns in the absence of each turn, “yeses and yeses and yeses, to which, if one has the stomach to add the breakages, upheavals distortions, inversions of all this chambermade music one stands, given a grain of goodwill . . . betwixtween” (*FW* 184). Likewise Nietzsche declares: “must we not return eternally?”¹¹⁰⁴ Essentially, Shem returns as a “low hero” that uses ink as presence, “synthetic ink and sensitive paper for his own end out of his wit’s waste”

¹⁰⁹⁹ Nietzsche, *Zarathustra*, p. 52.

¹¹⁰⁰ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 432.

¹¹⁰¹ Attridge, *The Singularity of Literature*, p. 129.

¹¹⁰² Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 404.

¹¹⁰³ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 432.

¹¹⁰⁴ Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, p. 179.

(FW 185). However, Shem's excrement still marks the excess that escapes all unity in being. This is characterised in the "crap in his hand", which he uses to write while he "pissed" and "faked" in "indelible ink" "obscene" words covered his "own body" with "bowels of his misery" (FW 185). The repetition of empty words devoid of truth constitutes the erasure of being in the return of language that is the limit. The neuter states the subject recycles his-story in the wheel of language, "nastily appropriately . . . wrote over every square inch of the only foolscap available" on his "own body, till by its corrosive sublimation . . . cyclewheeling history . . . with each word" (FW 185-86).

At this point in the analysis, Shem interrupts the neuter's defamatory attack on his duplicitous being, as he responds to the voice of the unknown God. He challenges the presence as he wakens to the belief that he can justify his position as an artist of difference: "JUSTIUS (to hismother): Brawn is my name and broad is my nature . . . Stand forth, Nayman of Noland (for no longer will I follow you obliquelike through the inspired form of the third person singular . . . but address myself to you, with the empirative of my vendettative" (FW 187). Indeed, Shem calls the neuter "Nayman" which sounds like no man from "Noland" or no land. Stephen's search for unity with the signature of the text results in his being thrown into a perpetual state of abeyance, just like Sisyphus that pushes a rock up a hill only to watch it roll down again. Here too, Shem addresses the unknown with a similar tone of revolt while being stuck in nihilism. Nihilism emerges in the vision of absence that continues to circle around the words that are overturned in the corrosive experience. Indeed the subject fails to recognise there is no unity with the dead author behind the signature of negative thought that "never dies".¹¹⁰⁵ The fact that there is no death is evident in the voice of "THERE IS" that keeps on speaking through the "DISAPPEARANCE" of the

¹¹⁰⁵ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 210.

subject.¹¹⁰⁶ The “absence of God that speaks” replies, “I am, to laughter in your true colours ere you be back for ever till I give you your talkingto! Shem Macadamson, you know me and I know you and all your shemerries” (FW 187).¹¹⁰⁷ While Stephen does not enter into a direct conversation with the unknown, Shem’s being confronts silence at limit, which shrouds a “dimension” of “muteness” leading to madness. Derrida argues, “one should never pass over in silence”, because this is the presence of God which has no unity with man and “cannot be received as such by the ear”.¹¹⁰⁸

Here again, there is no dialogue with the God that is described as “Nayman”, which may be the Jewish God that manifests as a “spiritual conception of God”.¹¹⁰⁹ We can see how the negativity of God’s absence turns to a positivism, which “denotes” his separation from man, in the “twofold connotation of absence and presence in the silence”.¹¹¹⁰ Ironically, the speaker’s voice parodies the neuter’s role as he demands the other to “conceal yourself”, because it is “looking black against you” (FW 188). Indeed, Blanchot argues: “There are no white spaces unless there is black, no silence unless speech and noise are produced, in order to cease. Thence . . . the fragmentary disposition”.¹¹¹¹ The image of death begs the reader to have mercy on the “I without I”, “Let us pry” (FW 188). The voice of the subject then switches back to the voice of the neuter that presents a parody of Stephen’s portrait again. Moreover, this subject is subjected to a strict Jesuit upbringing that involves purification retreats with sermons on heaven and hell, which evokes an ongoing sense of fear in God in infinite, hellish suffering. The neuter states that the subject called into question had been, “fattened from holy childhood up in this two easter island on the piejaw of

¹¹⁰⁶ Blanchot, *The Work to Come*, pp. 24-27.

¹¹⁰⁷ Blanchot, *The Work to Come*, p. 38.

¹¹⁰⁸ Derrida, “Two Words for Joyce”, in *Post-Structuralist Joyce*, p. 176.

¹¹⁰⁹ Epstein, *Judaism*, p. 195.

¹¹¹⁰ Epstein, *Judaism*, p. 28.

¹¹¹¹ Blanchot, *The Book to Come*, p. 12.

hilarious heaven and roaring other place” (FW 188). The story is repeated, but with the twist of difference in the letters displaced in discontinuity. He proceeds to state that his, “twosome twiminds” recollected, “forenenst gods, hidden and discovered, nay, condemned fool . . . Do you then hold yourself then for some god in the manger, Shehohem that you will neither serve not let serve, pray nor let pray?” (FW 188) There is no doubt that the theme of redemption in suffering from the exegesis of affliction resembles Stephen Dedalus in *A Portrait of the Artist*. Indeed Shem is told by the neuter that he will be left “weeping” for his “sins”, because of his “art of arts”, just as Stephen claims he too will “not serve that which I no longer believe” (P 268).

Cracks of madness emerge in the neuter’s portrait of Shem, just as the problem of separation from God leads into the torment of self deception: “(you see I have read your theology for you) alternating the morosity of my delectations—a philtred love, trysting by tantrums, small peace in ppenmark—with sensibility, sponsibility, passibility and prostability” (FW 189). The neuter confesses that he is a witness to Shem’s affliction of being responsible for the account of “scribblative” (FW 189). He shows no sign of responsibility for the other in his response to the call of the betrayal. However, he sees Shem’s desire to know the unknown in being akin to dying the “death of the other” before being the “premature gravedigger, seeker of the nest of evil in the bosom of a good word” (FW 189). Once again, Shem’s being recalls Stephen’s search for an origin in being with the dead ghost that entombs the subject in the grave. Instead of recognising the dual way of reading, being before absence at the limit, Shem is described as facing “death with every disaster” as he reduces language to “records to ashes” that return in the “didst unto dudst” (FW 189-90).¹¹¹² Ironically, the neuter or Shem’s twin interrupts the drama carrying an unknown letter that alludes

¹¹¹² Blanchot, *The Writing of the Disaster*, p. 37.

to being on its way to death: “O hell, here comes our funeral! Oh pest, I’ll miss the post!” (FW 190) Whoever the speaker is they are delivering letters on the way to a funeral, links back to the hidden letter circulating as a twin beneath the surface of the spectral character that adds secret information to the text. However, a reference to the act of a “metamorphoseous” unfolding with “oozy rocks” and “shemming” conjures up oblique images of “sitting” on a “crooked” platform. Moreover the scene recalls fragments of particles of “Circe”, showing Shakespeare rewritten in the pun “Scheekspair”. Indeed this dead author makes an appearance in the wake of the fragmented, changing, subject that returns backwards to the future as the past keeps recycling the ruin again, and again into the disjuncture of jumbling, scattered letters.

The thought of death proceeds to haunt the fragmentation of being Shem who is killed, just like Jesus the Son of God. Indeed, he is depicted as being “saturated with emptiness”, while “excruciated, in honour bound to the cross” of his own “cruelfiction” (FW 192).¹¹¹³ The critic asks the reader to take pity, “weep” for “all me” (FW 192). The neuter digs a grave as it repetitiously erases Shem’s being over in the fragments of rubble, while destroying his being in a void. This is the “disaster” Blanchot characterises in the “dream”, which is “without end” and “waking is without beginning”¹¹¹⁴ Indeed, the worklessness of being in literature keeps unwinding in the dead ruins of “unfinished separation” that reconstitutes the positivity of presence.¹¹¹⁵ Here the absence of the “ineffaceable trait” is upheld by the neuter that seeks to expose the inauthenticity.¹¹¹⁶ The unknown voice in the “white space” poses a question to the other that is embodied in the fragments of black ink:¹¹¹⁷ “Am I not right? Yes? Yes? Yes? Holy wax and holifer! . . . Do you hear what I’m seeing,

¹¹¹³ Blanchot, *The Book to Come*, p. 57.

¹¹¹⁴ See Blanchot, *The Writing of the Disaster*, p. 37.

¹¹¹⁵ See Blanchot, *The Writing of the Disaster*, p. 58.

¹¹¹⁶ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 404.

¹¹¹⁷ Blanchot, *The Book to Come*, p. 57.

hammet? . . . Do you see your dial in the rockingglass? Look well! Bend down a stigmy till I! It's secret!" (FW 193) Being is finally described as a secret of becoming in the string of who's that demands a response to a shrill sound beyond the limit of comprehension: "Quoiquoiquoiquoiquoiquoiquo" (FW 195). However, the being in itself never arrives. It is continually becomes a disguise of letters as Blanchot argues, between being and nothingness as it escapes unity in the limit-experience: "The self has never been the subject of this experience: The 'I' will never arrive at it, or will the individual, this particle of dust".¹¹¹⁸ Indeed, the subject is smashed into smithereens with a Nietzschean hammer as the question of being lies in the rubble of "muteness". The uncanny sense of infinite questioning by the neuter "affirms" being as Blanchot notes in his writing of the "Absence of the Book".¹¹¹⁹ The disappearance of being originates in the return that allows man to become a thing, where material value reins.

Blanchot argues that the search for an origin is an ethics of ethics in the sense that the "word" that inhabits being is an enigma that affirms, "art, speech and thought". The origin is the limit, central to every relation, but also "absent of any centre".¹¹²⁰ The thought of the eternal return of being in literature affirms a response in being a fragment. Once again, the subject turns in literature like a wheel unwinding presence in absence. The absence of being returns in Shem's twin figure named Shaun who comments on the twin or double of a corrupt fraudster: "Shem Skrivenitch, always cutting my prhose to please his phrase, bogorror, I declare I get the jawache!" (FW 423) Yahweh or Shaun is also a pun on "yawn". The drama of being a yawn is seen by Holland as such: "There is no longer subject-object, but a 'yawning gap' . . . in the gap the subject and object are dissolved, there is a passage . . . the one and the

¹¹¹⁸ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 209.

¹¹¹⁹ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 403.

¹¹²⁰ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 404.

other have lost their separate existence”.¹¹²¹ Indeed, while Shaun insists that the thief stop or “Swop beef” the voice of the unknown blurs boundaries in identity (*FW* 423). Shem tells us: “He’s weird, I tell you, and middayevil down to his vegetable soul” (*FW* 423). Ironically, not only is his occupation frowned upon, but he too is questioned for being associated with Jews: “Then he caught the europicolas and went into the society of jewes” (*FW* 423). This very telling remark begs one to ask if he has now embodied the negativity in being, central to Jewish thought. Undoubtedly, roles reverse in the ongoing question of being that hollows the void speaking out of the text. Indeed, Shem’s being is obsessed with the question of language as Shaun notes in “his root language” that incessantly is “making act of oblivion” (*FW* 424). Furthermore, he is accused of “picksticked into his lettruce invrention” for the “hundredlettered name again” (*FW* 424). The imagery of cutting up and shredding language into multiplicity forms the basis of untruth that culminates into the act of lying. Moreover Shaun states Shem “dimmed letter in it is a copy”, while he showed “lowquacity” even though the “last word in stolentelling” (*FW* 424). Each word repeated is borrowed from language, in literature, and because it is an inauthentic copy of the real, truth is seen as forgery.

Shaun tells us the “openear secret” begins and ends with the “Book of Lief” (*FW* 425). The image of the open ear brings us back the thought of being Jewish, and the people bound to a book, which reveals a twofold thought of being at the limit. The word “Lief” is spelt as a lie with the added letter “f”, as a sound blows out, which recalls the thought of worklessness. Indeed the “prebeing a postman” reveals an ethic, which presents an “eternal return” in the feminine space that harbours a hidden truth in the subject’s reply to absence, which is “yes”, “Oessoyess!” (*FW* 488) This word recalls Bloom’s odyssean journey to an empty home that ends in bed with Molly, as

¹¹²¹ Michael Holland, “Contestation between Blanchot and Bataille”, in *The Power of Contestation*, ed. Kevin Hart & Geoffrey, H. Hartman (London: The John Hopkins University Press, 2004), p. 30.

he inhabits her dream as absence. We are told to listen: “Let us hear, therefore, as you honour and obey the queen, whither the indwellingness of that while shamefieth be entwined of one or atoned of two” (*FW* 488). The silence of the call recalls Molly’s being in “Penelope” who spins a tapestry of lies in the day only to undo them at night. Her being reveals the limit to being in the words that wind around an untouchable, hidden presence, as she remains faithful to the infidelity of language. Indeed, the question of language and the question of being keep turning on itself. A parody of Molly’s last words lead into the dying portrait of Anna Livia Plurable as she returns in the “ceasing of being” that “repeats it(self) as a repletion without origin” in letters: “Oyes! Oyeses! Oyesesyesses!” (*FW* 604) A prayer on the pun Heaven interrupts: “Of Kevin, of increate God the servant, of the Lord Creator a filial fearer, who given to the growing grass took to the tall timber, slippery dick the springy heeler . . . we shall pray till, in the search for love of knowledge” (*FW* 604). Holy Kevin reminds the subject that death takes place in the textual corpus that leaves “speech in turn ruins” and “being in the guise of an indefinite murmur”, while man is reborn as “sinner” (*FW* 607). Indeed, “whosold word” begs the reader to reverse the image of being overturned to ground zero, now in absence where it is all and nothing in a paradox.

ALP or Anna Livia Plurabelle disappears into Alma Luvia, Pollabella as she falls into the image of a “leaf”. Nietzsche argues: “Every concept originates through our equating what is unequal. No leaf ever wholly equals another, and the concept of ‘leaf’ is formed through an arbitrary abstraction, from these individual differences”.¹¹²² Indeed, ALP’s dialogue with the exteriority is reminiscent of Molly’s relationship with the differences that constitute her being in relation with the outside:

¹¹²² Nietzsche, “On Truth and Lying”, in *The Portable Nietzsche*, p. 46.

“wheel turning by itself and in on itself”.¹¹²³ ALP states: “Lsp! I am leafy speafing, Lpf . . . Lispn! No wind no word. Only a leaf, just a leaf and then leaves. The woods are fond always. As were we their babes in” (FW 619). The subject “affirms itself as discontinuity” in the image of mother nature that gives birth to new leaves, while dying from old trees.¹¹²⁴ ALP begs the reader to “Rise up now and aruse! Norvena’s over. I am leafy, your goolden, so you called me, may me life” (FW 619). ALP recalls her past with HCE: “Every letter is a hard but yours sure is the hardest crux ever” (FW 623). Once being is recorded in the book, being becomes immortal in the book of dead, in the book of revelation where the Jewish being affirms presence. ALP asks us to remember being in the passing over: “Where you meet I. The day. Remember” (FW 626). It is in the everyday experience of life that the Jewish being affirms existence in the breath of life that crosses the desert in exodus. ALP asserts her face of duplicity, which follows blindness of being before the “direction of unknown”. Here, unity is forbidden in the relationship of separation and difference: “Yes, you’re changing, sonhusband, and you’re turning, I can feel you, for a daughterwife” (FW 627).¹¹²⁵ ALP claims, “we feel. Then we fall” (FW 627). She becomes “alla-niuvia pulchrabelled” while “passing out” in the broken twig dying a “bitter ending” (FW 627). Returning to “Finn again” or finished again or possibly HCE, she drifts to the breathless—dead: “My leaves have drifted from me. All. But one clings . . . Lff . . . Yes” (FW 628). Her death embodies the unfinished limit, to limitlessness into infinity.

While this chapter began by exploring the notion of the fragment in the characterisation of HCE’s being, Jewish thought prevailed in the problem of being in relation to language. Indeed, the unnameable and unknowable critic named the neuter,

¹¹²³ Blanchot, *The Book to Come*, p. 61.

¹¹²⁴ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 161.

¹¹²⁵ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 163.

and possibly God was the main protagonist that interrogated and judged the subject called into question. HCE resembled Bloom's character portrait in *Ulysses*. HCE was a being that welcomed difference as his presence dispersed in the fabric of separation and difference. HCE was not stigmatised or traumatised by the affliction of being the negative other, traits that presented in Shem who also resembled a portrait of Stephen in *Ulysses*. Indeed, Shem was afflicted by the negativity in being before absence. As such, HCE represented the multiplicity in being in a constant state of flux. He welcomed the negativity in being as a positive trait, which upheld the injustice of criminality judged in the acts of forgery and inauthenticity in secret letters. The reversal of positions seen in the dialectical thought revealed being in a state of constant metamorphosis. Thus, HCE resembled the Jewish hero Moses who received the ineffable word of God's call to Israel. Moreover, HCE is a parody of similar sounding fragments of Genesis, the Tower of Babel and Deuteronomy. However, Shem's being that was called into question struggled to come to terms with his identity that was depicted as a shambles, fake and liar. He refused to accept the injustice of being in exile before an unknown presence. Ironically, the representation of the deceitful scribbler resembled the neuter that also criticised the subject that was called into question. Shem's portrait consisted of a dialogue that formed no unity between the questioner and the questioned that was constantly conflicting in His story.

The question of genesis and the origin of being seen as "nothing" in the word, filtered into the false accusation of perpetual lying in duplicity, which unfolded into a pun on the life or leaf that characterised Anna Livia Plurabell. It was impossible to know exactly "who" was speaking, because each subject rolled over into the next letter. The lies that spun outwards constituted the duplicity in being before worklessness as the subject's doubled over in the language of separation and

difference, pertinent to Blanchot's notion of the "Absence of the Book". Indeed, Derrida notes that the "counter-signature" that signs lets the subject be "prayed to" but refuses to be translated, because of "incalculable" limits to being. Thus, being that stands in relation to language and the book of Liffy, or lie-ffy is a gift that "contradicts" and "effaces by subscribing", which is indeed a "crazy" and mad thought.¹¹²⁶ However, the fragment is the very limit to being seen, heard or read, by HCE, Shem and ALP, as each subject stands in relation to all that has been inscribed in the spiralling effect of limitless limits of the one "book" of life. ALP personified the pages or leaves in the book that led to rebirth in the non ending-dead. However, being in this book smashes the old form in a novel way in light of the Nietzschean hammer as being becomes infinite. The fragment of being bound to literature, teaches the reader to rethink beyond being as being in flux, being in relation to being in relation to infinity, as being returns to language as the origin and source of becoming. Thus, negativity heralds an ethics of ethics, as language lies beyond the limits of truth, but always remains in the boundary of literature, because the book is the whole totality of being: "The book is the whole, whatever form this totality might take".¹¹²⁷ Hence, being has no presence other than inside literature, outside being yet to come.

¹¹²⁶ Derrida, "Two Words for Joyce", in *Post-Structuralist Joyce*, p. 159.

¹¹²⁷ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 429.

CONCLUSION

The Limit to Being in Joyce's Literature

"The limit-experience is the experience that awaits this ultimate man, the man who one last time is capable of not stopping at the sufficiency he has attained: the desire of he who is without desire, the dissatisfaction of he who is 'wholly' satisfied, pure lack where there is accomplishment of being. The limit-experience is the experience of what is outside when the whole excludes . . . the inaccessible".¹¹²⁸

In retrospect, this thesis sought to examine the question of "being" in relation to "language" in Joyce's poetics with the use of Blanchot's critical writings on the "limit-experience". It was here at the intersection between being and language that the problem of alterity revealed itself for the subjects that faced the limit to "presence" in the space of language. Once being was put into "question" the subject's response to being in relation to language rotated around a doubling experience. Indeed, the subject's attempts to find an origin in language revealed a limit to knowledge in each text, as the subjects faced language as an "other". This limit experience unfolded in Joyce's quest for truth in language in the everyday, which led to the revaluation of all human relationships. As such, Nietzsche's insight into language through Blanchot's writing on the limit-experience shed light on Joyce's odyssey into the experience of being a double in life: "To grasp the limits of reason—only *this* is truly philosophy . . . To what end did God give mankind revelation?"¹¹²⁹ Indeed, Joyce grasped "presence" of being a negative "other" as he grasped the "experience of alterity" resurrected from the first question of being in Genesis. The sweet bitter taste of knowledge emerged out of the "separation" of being in relation to the first question of the word of God. Thus, once man turned around to see that he was in fact a naked being separate to

¹¹²⁸ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 205.

¹¹²⁹ Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols/ The Anti-Christ*, p. 184.

language, being faced the exegesis of being in negativity. In the theme of death, Joyce exposed the in-authenticity of language stripped bare. Negative thought led to the subjects encounters with spirit that revealed itself at the limit to the being in the secret letters coming from elsewhere and speaking from “absence”, but still ironically bound to literature. This development, led to the question of the “dead author” which unveiled a haunting presence at the centre of the poetics. Hence, the double relationship between the subject and the neuter framed the problem of alterity, since no one answered the final call from the space of literature, linked to the sacred space of creativity. This fact supported Nietzsche’s claim, “to whom ‘God’ is the word for the great Yes to all things”, culminating into “what end a lie is told”.¹¹³⁰ Paradoxically, Joyce exposed existence at the limit of infinity to the Outside: “Yes to all things”.

In *Dubliners*, Joyce revealed an insight into the problem of being in relation to language in “The Sisters”, “An Encounter”, “Eveline”, “A Painful Case”, “Grace” and “The Dead”. Each story began and ended with the question of morality as depicted in the theme of “death”. The thought of death constantly haunted each story by the neuter that put each subject on trial to face a series of judgements from within each text, while doubling up being as other. The unspeakable limit to knowledge surfaced in the student’s relationship with the dead Dublin priest, Father Flynn. The crisis of separation was carried over into the adolescent boy’s limit-experience with the stranger, while he himself felt nothing but being estranged by the words circling at the limit. The experience of adolescence followed into the adulthood limit-experience of self-estrangement for Eveline, who collected dead portraits of family members that harboured a memorial in the memory that felt nothing other than fear of God. She was stigmatised by the fear of her own belief and was unable to act in life, which revealed

¹¹³⁰ Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols/ The Anti-Christ*, p. 184.

a serious disability as responsibility was handed over to an absent God. The problem of responsibility was put on trial for Mr Duffy as he experienced language as the limit to death in life that destroyed and resurrected Mrs Sinico's presence in speech. The subject's self-consciousness kept turning backwards like Orpheus in search of truth, in the wake of a doubling experience. However, for Kernam there was no sense of grasping the dead, absent God apart from speech as he stood at the limit to believing in the ghost of the word. Indeed, something unspeakable left, unknown in the trace of absence in faith lingered into Gabrielle's encounter with language. Here, the subject awakened to the limit-experience of sheer dissonance in the face of death, as he looked backwards. The writer's dark gaze turning back in time attested to a final blow for the subject erased over by language and resurrected in the final call to judgement.

The problem of being in relation to language in *A Portrait of the Artist* was examined in Stephen's experience of "affliction" as he was called into question by the neuter who mediated life from exterior voices in the home and social life. Here, the reader encountered the problem of being before death, as the thought of negativity prevailed in the doubling as being was constantly judged. The site of alterity exposed itself in the doubling of his being that was criticised as an outsider by the neuter in the text that shadowed him as a ghost. In effect he was a stranger to his own being separated in language. His presence emerged from a pre-conscious to adolescent self-consciousness as he experienced the guilt of sin through the flesh of the body. A theological experience unfolded as Stephen's being was put to test and placed on trial by language that seduced his being, while it took possession of his lived experiences. Indeed, as Stephen's being heard his name called from the exteriority, his limit-experience with separation from the word led him to encounter a negative experience, as he searched for a truth behind the word. In effect, Stephen struggled to embody the

essence of the thing named as he stood before the images reflected in the portraits of the whore, the virgin, the Church and God. He confronted a problem at the limit to knowledge, as he faced the image as a negative presence of absence. The limit experience to being before absence fuelled Stephen's refusal to enter the church, thus he remained the outsider to the everyday life in search of liberty. Ironically, the problem of language presented a double bind for his being that refused all unity in his theory of being as his mind searched for a way to freedom. While he found his calling to be an artist of the everyday in the here and now and not in the imaginary belief of Jesus, a religious struggle was central to his affliction experienced in the real world.

Stephen Hero presented the ethical problem of being in relation to language. The problem of alterity was examined in his experience of "negative dialectics". In this scarcely studied text, Joyce planned to present an "autobiographical book" (*SH* 15). Indeed, the genesis of the artist's creative project revealed itself in a poetics of alterity that was based on separation and breakage in language. Here, the problem of alterity unravelled itself in the question of being in dialogue with the running critique of language that also ran parallel to the discourse. This began with the poetics that seduced him into a siren space of doubling by the neuter. He was shadowed as another subject estranged to the self by the exegesis of language. His being then faced the writer's responsibility, as he was called into question for rethinking being in negativity from the exterior perspective in relation to multiple perspectives. This is precisely where his dialectical thought of negativity probed the limits to experience. Stephen probed the limits to literature from the position of writer, as he took into account the value of the word in relation to the whole, as seen in his negative theory that ripped language apart. He interrogated the value of the word that he saw falling between two slopes as he refused to identify with an absent creator, father, and God.

Indeed, Stephen's confrontation with death acted as a creative and corrosive force as he delved into his doubled past in search of an authentic origin in the poetic word. However, his search into the unknown word thrust him back into the space of negativity each time he tried to pin it down. This fact was put into play in each dialogue with each subject, which exposed the injustice of being in unequal relations. He embraced the affliction of being at the limit as he refused an inauthentic belief system, which pushed him into the arms of literature and towards negative thought. The dialectic of alterity awakened his being to the call from language present in the exterior that fuelled his decision to revolt against the injustice and create just poetics.

In *Ulysses*, the problem of being in relation to language resurfaced in Stephen's experience of the "return", as he confronted the limit to language in the dialectical questioning of being that emerged from within the narrative. Essentially, he was Nietzsche's higher man desperate to overcome the nothingness in being in language. As such, Stephen probed the authenticity of names as he searched for an origin in being before the fiction of literature. Admittedly, Stephen put to test the limit of his presence as he questioned Shakespeare's *Hamlet* seen in the "all in all" (*U* 9.1018). The subject questioned the parts that made up the whole of a single particle of totality in the characters of Shakespeare's plays: "We walk through ourselves, meeting robbers, ghosts, giants, old men, young men, wives, widows, brothers-in-love. But always meeting ourselves" (*U* 9.1046). However, while Stephen used a dialectics of negativity to pull threads apart that made up the whole in the singular, just as he questioned the self in the face of the other characters dead in the word named God, his negative thought repetitiously returned back in search of an origin in the space questioned. Here, the origin of the word in question remained inaccessible in the dead corpus seen in the remains left behind in the question mark that kept on resurfacing

back in different contexts from Shakespeare to God's name. Ironically, as the self turned back in the return of the question, "I" negated a different "I" resurrected in the memory trace that was erased over. Thus, an ethics of alterity emerged from Stephen's negative thought that questioned the exteriority of the names in the dead words, as he questioned the corrosive force of language. His thought refused to accept the absence of being before language as he faced the annihilation of the word as other. Indeed, this problem resulted in the haunting experience of facing the ghost in the name of mother that refuses to let go of him as he battled with his rootless origin

Leopold Bloom presented the ethical problem of being in relation to language as he faced literature as a secondary corpus of "difference" to his being in *Ulysses*. He kept on redoubling over as negativity in the experience of separation in language. Bloom's memory was a slate that transcribed events over in the questioning of being that was replayed in the trial by the neuter. It was evident that Bloom's being merged with the doubles of other images of other characters that were crossed over and erased, which revealed being to be in excess of negation. His being opened up to difference as his negative gaze acted as a positive driving force before the duplicity of language. In turn, his being revealed the trace of the subject that became another, while becoming sheer dissonance in repetition. This fact shows he is never the same, but paradoxically a return to the same universal word presented in the subject "I". Here, the memory trace of self-consciousness that was erased over was reconstructed in the language of becoming in alterity. Bloom's mind disseminated itself as it dispersed meaning into shreds of fragments, as a means of making up a whole scene. Ironically, the whole scene was never complete, because each scene in his memory was a fictitious fiction doubling over. Thus, his being failed to grasp the reality of the truth in experience, as the memory erased over in reflection. He perceived the limit to being as anterior to

being and not interior, thus there is no centre to being, but inauthenticity in language. It was evident that he recognised that the centre of being is inscribed in the exteriority of language seen as a twofold experience. His being represented truth lying in being embraced in sheer separation. Bloom is the ethical being that attested to the changing face of becoming in an infinite state of negativity that is a productive vision of being.

Molly's portrait of being in relation to language led her being to limit to "presence", as she questioned the original experience of being with Bloom that escaped signification in *Ulysses*. In search of unity with memory, she retraced her lived experience back in time as she tried to locate the virginal experience of kissing Bloom. However, the more Molly retraced her lived experience of being back in time, the more her being revealed an inability to locate an original truth. Her being attests to an ethics of presence at the limit to the fidelity of being betrayed in language. The act of weaving the same story over and over again in the redoubling of repetition led her thought to question the authenticity of the experience to being as she recalled her relationships with Boylan in the remembrance of adultery. Molly confessed that she had let it slip to Bloom that she had indulged in other affairs too. Her obsession with infidelity mirrored Bloom's acts of infidelity. The winding of her infidelity backwards and forwards begged the question "who" is speaking through the textual fabric of alterity. As Molly's dialogue continued to circle around an absent centre it could be possible to see that perhaps the space of language had come to occupy the interiority of the text without a voice of its own in the direct speech. In effect the reader does not know who is speaking in the text, just as the language circled in the repetition of events that erased all truth in the language which acted as a corrosive and volatile presence. Importantly, Molly's voice marks a dramatic shift in the absence of being before a presence that refuses to be touched as it draws being to the exterior, lying at a

limit. Here, Molly's voice elicits a trace of the circle of alterity itself that remains unknown—God, which testifies to presence unwinding in the ethics of truth in fiction. This fact is in itself an affirmation that the real Outside occupies the inside of the text.

In *Finnegans Wake*, the problem of being in relation to language was examined in the experience of the “fragment”. Here Joyce pushed being in relation to language to the extreme limits of knowledge. Indeed, this text presented the “savage economy of hieroglyphics” which wrenched being apart in the return of difference.¹¹³¹ Clearly, the problem of being before separation in the word led to the negative thought of “dying” into “limitlessness”. The limitlessness thought to being revealed itself in HCE's relation to language. At each turn his presence doubled into a state of difference. Essentially, his presence spiralled outwards and away from totality towards multiple interpretations of being in alterity. Indeed, his being kept on folding outwards into a polyglot of diverse images, sounds and letters as the language depicted Heath's notion of a “reality” that is essentially “without limits” in literature.¹¹³² This thought supported the claim that that language becomes limitless in the manifestation of work that “illimits language” in the limitless-experience of fragmentation, which derives from sheer difference in each re-reading.¹¹³³ As such, the reader came face to face with the separation of being thrown into the abeyance of discontinuity as roles reversed. Moreover, the letters transgressed beyond the limits in the ruinous rubble of language, as being was ripped apart in the shattered images of dead fragments. A serious ethical problem emerged for the subject Shem that was dying in the unstable presence dispersed in the broken symbols of deconstruction. His fragmented subjectivity of fake images in letters exemplified the “eternal return” at the limit, as being returned in death, dying in the “I” that simply refused to die.

¹¹³¹ Heath, “Ambiviolences”, *Poststructuralist Joyce*, p. 55.

¹¹³² Heath, “Ambiviolences”, *Poststructuralist Joyce*, p. 55.

¹¹³³ Heath, “Ambiviolences”, *Poststructuralist Joyce*, p. 51.

However, being before language came secondary to the word copied by the neuter and echoed back in the letters ALP. The alphabet revealed the impossibility of dying in the word that refused to be silenced in the voice that responded to the unknown space of literature—God. Ultimately, the text testified to the spirit of being in life, again dying in the rebirth of the book that begins and ends with life breaking letters apart.

In view of being in relation to language in the letters of literature, Joyce shows human nature: “At the limit of libertine power, then, stands a ravaging lack of power . . . being in fact impossible can only culminate in radical impossibility”.¹¹³⁴ As a result, Blanchot’s theory helped to shed light on this unresolved problem of being alterity. This impossibility arose from language itself, which is the limit to truth and justice from the Outside. It has been made clear in the tracing of being in relation to language that the “Outside” space is a source Hill posits as “not an exteriorisation of a poetic project constantly striving to rekindle itself within the same perceptual parameters. It is more the promise of an encounter with the resistance of things—words”.¹¹³⁵ Indeed, Joyce’s pledge to revolt against all unity in being in relation to the exterior world began with the word. The word for Joyce has its roots in the origin of his own being that he found impossible to know due to the “irreducibility of others, who appeared in their silent strangeness”.¹¹³⁶ This silent strangeness exposed the alterity of being that remained untranslatable, as presence disappeared in the turn of the question. Correspondingly, the subject’s response to being under erasure remained “forever unreconciled with itself and with the world”.¹¹³⁷ The critical limit to being structured in the movement of doubling in the ghost of alterity always circled around the betrayal of infidelity. Language doubling over in the being of repetition showed

¹¹³⁴ Hill, *Radical Indecision*, p. 173.

¹¹³⁵ Hill, *Radical Indecision*, p. 201.

¹¹³⁶ Hill, *Radical Indecision*, p. 201.

¹¹³⁷ Hill, *Radical Indecision*, p. 231.

there was no truth. Hence being surpassed limits to being in relation to the prophetic speech of the unknown voice of the neuter. This problem posed to language asked the same question over again, which brings us back to a eternal thought of standing at a dead lock—death: “[t]he narrating voice that is inside only to the extent that it is Outside, at a distance without distance . . . call it spectral ghostlike”.¹¹³⁸ This fact brings us back to the question of God and the problem of genesis for being in poetics.

What I hope follows from this thesis on “the problem of alterity and Joyce’s poetics” in terms of future research stems from Blanchot’s ethical strategy that can be applied as a critical model. Clearly, the dialogical thought of negativity shows a just model that can be applied to modern, post-modern and contemporary fiction branching back to philosophy. As such, this model will help explain the problem of being in affliction before the unknown space of literature. By reading against the grain, multiple readings can be opened up for future research projects in the humanities. This thesis barely scratched the surface in regard to the problem of alterity in Joyce’s fiction, due to the abundance of critical theory that is gradually being uncovered on Blanchot. However, as the evidence in each chapter points out, the theme of negativity revealed that the power of death holds a central concern for Joyce and for Blanchot as it upholds life. This fact leads to the possibility of progressing into alternate close readings on Joyce with the aid of Jewish philosophy including that of Levinas. To date little has been little explored in terms of Joyce’s ethics of alterity from a Jewish perspective of negativity, which overlaps with negative theology. In his work on the death of God, Nietzsche does not aim at the “personal phenomena of unbelief” but a challenge of putting to test humanism.¹¹³⁹ Blanchot argues that Nietzsche recognised being freed from “the ideal of some absolute meaning

¹¹³⁸ Hill, *Radical Indecision*, p. 273.

¹¹³⁹ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 142.

conceived on the model of God, it is man who must create the world”.¹¹⁴⁰ This “intoxicating task” is perceived by the “Overman” Joyce adopts in his staging of the absent God buried in fiction.¹¹⁴¹ There is a minefield of work to be covered relating to Nietzsche’s negativity as interpreted by Blanchot and Joyce’s literature. Here Blanchot argues that the “Overman is he in whom nothingness makes itself will and who, free for death, maintains this pure essence of will in willing nothingness”.¹¹⁴² This theory advocates a new theology of becoming the self-producer in literature.¹¹⁴³

In conclusion, Epstein argues that man’s relationship with God, grounds all knowledge, which is in the first instance, “intellectual and, as such, includes the mastery of all those physical and metaphysical sciences—logic, philosophy, medicine, mathematics, astronomy—which leads to true perception of the being and the essence of God”.¹¹⁴⁴ By acknowledging being in relation to the negative thought of absence, man can justify all relations. As such, this thought is in itself an invaluable contribution to the field of knowledge. Indeed, while Joyce does not tell his readers what is ethically right and what is wrong, he shows the two sides of the human condition in conflict, put on trial in the play of his discourse. At times it seemed that the neuter judged the subjects called into question, however it was left up to the readers to decide what was just for being put on trial before an absent presence—the neuter. Ironically, it was evident that there was no God to be found in each text. However, Joyce did point out that language presented a secret that was the only source of becoming for being confronted with death in the creation of life, which is language. In each case being doubled over in difference in the acts of separation. This

¹¹⁴⁰ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 143.

¹¹⁴¹ Davidson, James Joyce, *Ulysses and the Construction of the Jewish Identity*, p. 111.

¹¹⁴² Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 148.

¹¹⁴³ See Bataille, *The Inner Experience*, p. 102. Bataille argues that Blanchot’s work on being in relation to language posits “the question of the new theology (which has only the unknown as object).

¹¹⁴⁴ Epstein, *Judaism*, 212.

problem is indisputably connected to all the human sciences, as such, because each faculty of humanities is related back to the question of language, which is the primary source of creation in culture that is bound to the book. Evidently, the philosophical question of alterity remains a problem in theory and this problem was not resolved in the close reading of Joyce's poetics. However this fact suggests there is still serious ethical work yet to be done in terms of knowing how language governs the subject in the face of absence. If there is no truth in fiction but only negation, then this fact demands further investigation. Hill concludes "justice for whom, for what"¹¹⁴⁵ after asking, "Who is speaking here . . . Who is speaking here then, is it the author?"¹¹⁴⁶

The unknown voice of absence till rustling amongst the pages presenting being, "nonetheless stands in a relationship with alterity".¹¹⁴⁷ Paradoxically: "what haunts the book . . . encloses the absence of the book that excludes the book".¹¹⁴⁸ And that "non-absent absence" is the final limit to the "possibility" of knowing the origin of creation for man critically bound to the book.¹¹⁴⁹ Hence man is thrown back into the world naked and refused the knowledge of God, "because no language can contain it".¹¹⁵⁰ Indeed, the subject is told: "Thou shalt make no idol".¹¹⁵¹ Here ironically "nothing ends and everything begins again", as Blanchot notes.¹¹⁵² Indeed, while Joyce "placed himself knowingly and willingly outside" of the church¹¹⁵³, he found justice and salvation in the sacred space of literature, which is a return back to the everyday life. And through this space the human spirit revealed itself in the absence of work, which affirmed the limit-experience to presence "Oyesesyese!" (FW 604)

¹¹⁴⁵ Hill, *Radical Indecision*, p. 334.

¹¹⁴⁶ Blanchot, *The Book to Come*, pp. 212-13.

¹¹⁴⁷ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 430.

¹¹⁴⁸ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 430.

¹¹⁴⁹ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p.430.

¹¹⁵⁰ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p.431.

¹¹⁵¹ Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p.434.

¹¹⁵² Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 149.

¹¹⁵³ Geert Lernout, *Help My Unbelief: James Joyce and Religion* (London: Continuum, 2010), p. 217.

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APPENDIX

Maurice Blanchot, "Joyce's First Novel" in *Chroniques littéraires du Journal des débats: Avril 1941- Août 1944* (Paris: Gallimard, 2007), pp 606-610.¹¹⁵⁴

It is strange that Joyce's first novel, an easy reading, full of immediate beauties, is much less well known than *Ulysses*. Not mentioning *Finnegans Wake* that only few people can today appreciate its merits. *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* has disappeared in the unparalleled renown of these extraordinary works. Of a less visible originality, a novel in appearance similar to the others, it has been neglected to the benefit of the extreme books that it would have however helped to understand. It was considered to be a starting work, which as Louise Gillet wrote in his *Stèle pour James Joyce*, "although the audacity was quite new in England, it was no big deal". It has been seen as a preparation, necessary for the author, useless for the public. And it is necessary to add that edited in bad conditions, at least in France, it had quickly become unavailable, so that current publication (at the Editions Gallimard, in the extremely good translation by Ludmila Savitzky) revealed it to a great number.

It is true, we cannot read *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* as book by any author. We love it for its refined qualities, for the beauty of a style at the same time very subtle and very sensitive. But it is to Joyce that we continuously go back to in this portrait that he drew of himself, in this autobiography where we see come out of his life all the major themes that his other works will interpret with known few

¹¹⁵⁴ Here I have translated from French to English Maurice Blanchot's review titled, "Joyce's First Novel": Maurice Blanchot, "*Le Premier roman de Joyce*", in *Chroniques littéraires du Journal des débats: Avril 1941- Août 1944*, (Paris: Gallimard, 2007), pp 606-610. This essay has not been translated from French to English before this dissertation was submitted for examination. It will contribute a highly original piece of scholarship to this research project on Joyce and Blanchot.

equivalents. *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* is the story of Joyce, the youth of Joyce, the vocation of which he became aware of, and furthermore, as Ludmila Savitzky says, it is a magical portrait. A magical portrait creates the being that it reveals. It gives to common events a unique and exemplary sense. It describes the real circumstances, not for their historical truth, but for the myth that they drew. We see appear through the everyday life incidents a figure that only takes shape with the radiant signification that it has. It is not the formation of a character that we witness; the character traits are the momentary expression of events of universal order, of timeless motives that coincide with an existence: they resemble those figures that draw in the sky the constellations, but that are before being formed scintillation, trail of light, system of fire.

The beginning of *Ulysses* is the sequel to *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. Stephen Dedalus proposes to show himself to us in the last pages of the biography. He is the artist that he wanted to become. The word “artist”, full of amphibologies, of slippery meanings, like most of the terms used by Joyce, is one of the keywords of the work. It does not only make allusion to the writer of which it qualifies the portrait, it designates the ideal that he has sought and the slow movements through which he took possession of it. The artist has nothing in common with the easy and bright colours under which the vulgar meaning imagines it. The conquest of the art is the conquest of the absolute. It is negation of the traditional world, affirmation of a freedom that does not suffer any limit, expression of a particular existence in the privileges that are essential to it. It does not relate to technique, but to a vision of the world and of life that this vision supposes. The deep and serious Dedalus who, as a portrait of one of the richest writers in comical inventions and in verbal funniness, almost never laughs, deeply lives everything that

he lives and always searches for more than he finds is before anything else avid of absolute. The religious tragedy that he goes through is in no way the conscious crisis of a “emancipated seminarian who had the misfortune of losing faith in the arms of a girl from Dublin”, as Louise Gillet believed, it is rather all the contrary, the girl from Dublin, by revealing to him sin, reveals to him the significance of faith; the days, the weeks that he lives after that are aimed at a scrupulous devotion that tends, as much as it can, to perfection. It is not between the fever of adolescence and an ordered and ascetic belief that he finally chooses, it is between two wisdoms, and the decisive hour for him is the one when the director of his institution, edified by his exemplary life, proposes to him to enter the order of the Jesuits. At this moment, Dedalus finds himself being called to a free life, foreign to social or religious orders, a difficult but prideful life, maybe marked forever by the mistake, but such as the spirit can dream of expressing with an absolute freedom. “To live, to err, to triumph, to recreate life out of life!” says Stephen in the admirable scene at the edge of the water, when the image of a young girl appears to him like an angel of youth and beauty, the messenger of the splendid course of life. Freedom is the soul of the artist, and this freedom is perpetual negation, negation to the benefit of an avidity that nothing satisfies, as well as premonition of what can never be reached. At the end of the book, Dedalus says to his friend Cranly: “I will tell you what I will do and what I will not do. I will not serve that in which I no longer believe, whether it calls itself my home, my fatherland, or my church: and I will try to express myself in some mode of life or art as freely as I can and as wholly as I can. Using for my defence the only arms I allow myself to use: silence, exile, and cunning”. This is the essential theme of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, and the existence as well as the subsequent works of Joyce is no than its paradoxical implementation (because the enigma is in it the equivalent to silence).

Of the other themes, the most striking is the one of filiation. We know that the theme of paternity plays a big role in *Ulysses* and (so it seems) in *Finnegans Wake*. *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* draws in a few brush strokes the unforgettable figure of the writer's father: "medical student, a tenor, an amateur actor, a politician, a bawler, a good fellow, a story-teller, a bankrupt and a praiser of his own past", we see this glorious man, responsible of the degradation of his family, lost in debts, innocent in debauchery and, in all circumstances, superb, crude, refined—we see him, or rather we catch a glimpse of him, because he only shows himself in furtive scenes, as if memory would only want to deliver him through allusions or problematic images. Similarly, the drama of the mother is always half veiled: this woman, certainly unhappy, tormented by an impossible husband, exhausted by the misery of a big family, does not even find in Stephen the consolation that she hopes for. "I had an unpleasant discussion with my mother, tells the latter to Cranley, she wishes me to do my Easter duty, and me, I do not want to". It is this theme that will become one of the obsessive motives of *Ulysses*. Dedalus did not want to get on his knees when his dying mother asked him to, he refused to pray for her and she cursed him; this curse brings into play endless reveries that reach their peak in the long mediation of Stephen and of Mulligan on *Hamlet*. Generally speaking, the feminine theme is one of the richest and most mysterious for Dedalus. Women are constantly present in it, but never show themselves directly, linked to evil or the poetic dream, they do not step out of a mist that steals from them makes them more evil or more seductive. They have strangeness of a crepuscular race, "a bat-like soul waking to the consciousness of itself in darkness and secrecy and loneliness, tarrying awhile, loveless and sinless, with her mild lover and leaving him to whisper of innocent transgressions in the latticed ear of the priest".

What mostly distinguishes the art from *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* from the art of *Ulysses* is that the finesse, the musicality of the images, the intimacy of the rhythm win in the first while in the second everything is power, indefinite renewal of the language, virtuosity of expression, sovereign creation of the meaning by the word. But, however, the passage from one to another is made naturally. Joyce's great works are immense drams that use total reality to deliver their enigma, and *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* is a discreet reverie, of an extreme charm and intensity that envelops the lived events and expresses their universal meaning.